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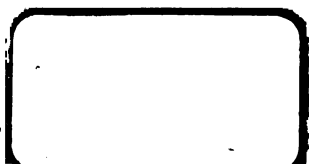
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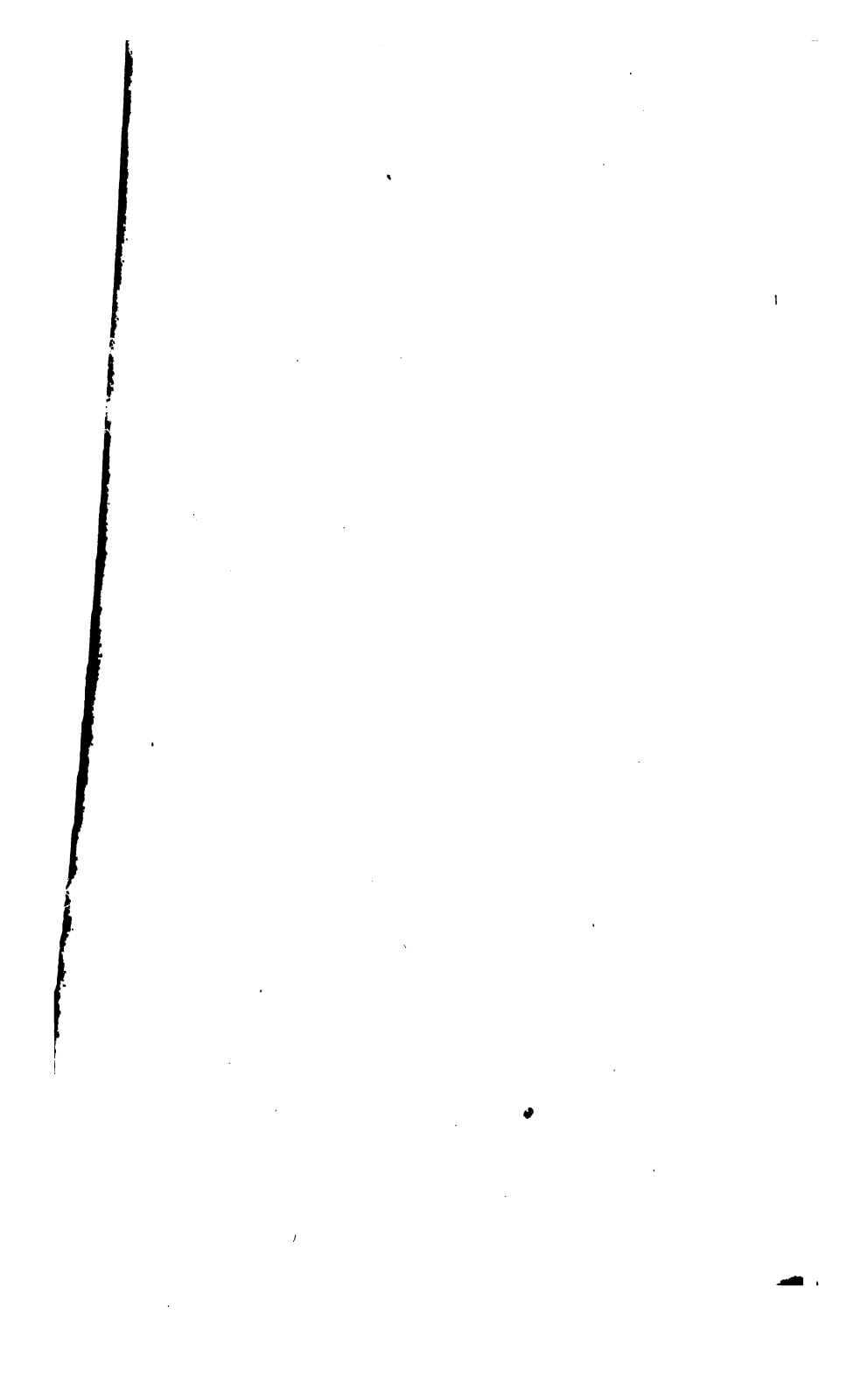
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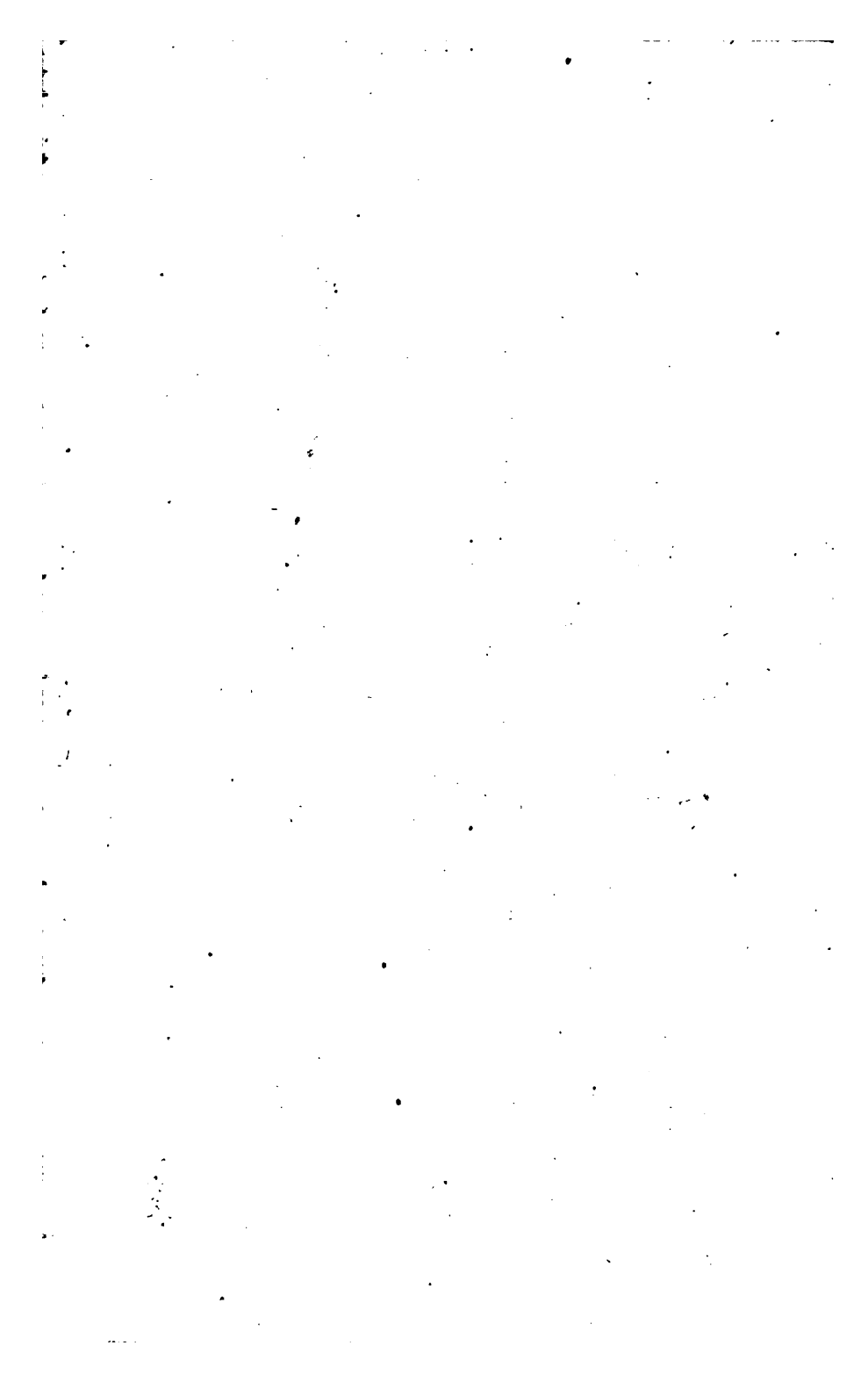
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ARTES SCIENTIA VERITAS









R. Corway del. *T. Chubb engr.*
Edward Goldney Gent. Widow.
49 in Age 1760, Constitution 29.



Love without Dissimulation
Past four a Clock, star-light, Morning.

London New York & New Orleans 1799. 1799. 1799. 1799.

26A2

A
FRIENDLY EPISTLE

TO THE

DEISTS,

AND

A RATIONAL PRAYER recommended to them,

In order for their CONVERSION to the
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

Humbly Dedicated

TO HIS

Most Excellent MAJESTY,

KING GEORGE.

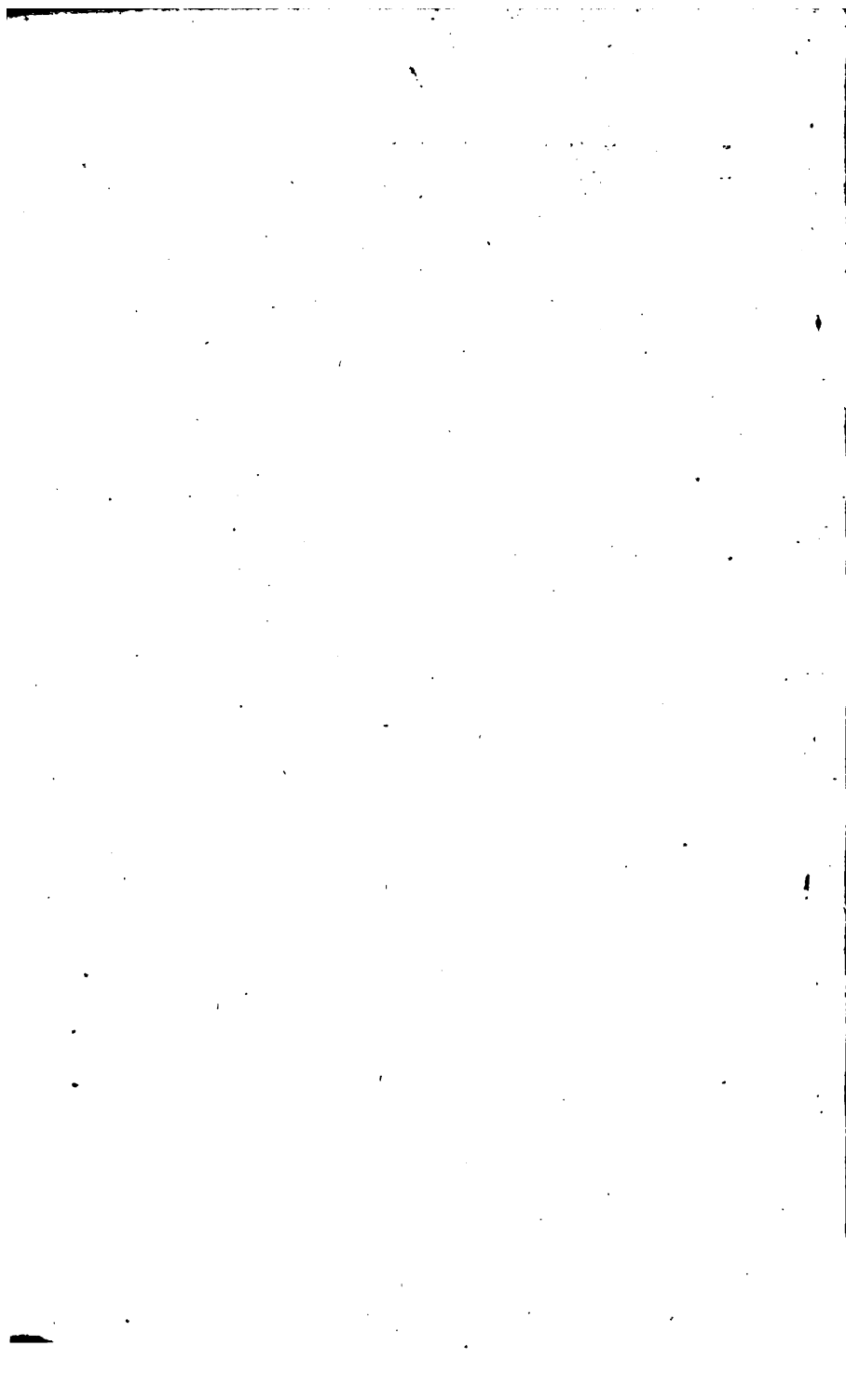
By EDWARD GOLDNEY, Sen^r. GENT.

L O N D O N,

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T O

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His Excellent Majesty,
KING GEORGE II.

Dearly Beloved Sovereign,

I Humbly Address Your Royal Person in
Profound Reverence, with the highest
Esteem and Veneration that is possible
for a Subject to have for His Prince.

Not for filthy Lucre's Sake, neither for
Earthly Honour or Grandeur, but from
Christian Motives, from a Principle of
heartly, sincere, unfeign'd Love and Affection,
which

which Your Majesty has caused in me. By your Majesty's Godlike governing this My Native Country both in regard to our Domestic and Foreign Affairs, Civil and Religious, in Church and State, being extremely well convinc'd, that Christian Liberty, Prosperity and Happiness, Both for the spiritual and Temporal Good of all your Majesty's Subjects is the Earnest Desire, the Pleasure and Delight of your Soul, the very Comfort and Joy of your Life.

Which manifestly appears to every Rational unprejudiced Mind who is not infected with the poisonous Sentiments of the Biggoted Dupes of perfidious ~~Gallican~~ ~~Papist~~ Antichristian, Arbitrary Government; for if Mankind would thoroughly consider, well weigh, and Religiously reflect on your Majesty's whole Conduct as a Prince, both in Publick and Private
Life

Life for these Thirty-one Years past, (ever since *England* has been blessed with your Majesty on the Throne) as a Father, Grand-Father, and a King, They would find it to be one uniform consistent Character, that of an *Israelite* Indeed in whom *there is no Guile*, a thoroughout Honest, sincere, Religious, Good Man. One of the very best of Sovereigns under the whole Canopy of Heaven, having Banish'd from your Majesty's Dominions Persecutions of every Kind, and where each of your Majesty's Subjects dwell safely under their own Vine and under their own Fig-tree: as *Judah* and *Israel* did all the Days of King *Solomon*. 1 *Kings* iv. 25. in a more Conspicuous Manner than in any other Nation in the Habitable Globe.

Almighty God grant your Majesty's Important valuable Life may be prolong'd, your Majesty's Health Confirm'd, and all Possible

Happiness and Comfort, (as sublunary Terrestrial Enjoyments will admit of,) till Your Majesty is Ripened for Celestial Felicity, Joys unspeakable, and to exchange your Majesty's perishable Crown, for one that is Immortal, the Lustre and Glory of which, will never fade, never decay, but be Permanent, Brilliant, easy and joyous to the Endless Ages of Eternity.

My Epistle to the Deists, is the first Work I ever published, therefore thought it my Duty to Dedicate it to your Majesty, Being King, Defender of the Apostolical Truly Catholic Christian Faith, which your Majesty hath unwaveringly kept, Established and confirm'd by Good and wholesome Laws throughout your Majesty's Dominions. I have not compos'd this, or any of my other Works to flatter Mankind, neither to please them, but for their Good to Edification, agreeable to St. *Paul*'s most
 excellent

excellent Advice to all Christians *Rom. xv. 2.* which was the Practice of *Christ*, and his Apostles, *verse 5. 1 Thes. ii. 3. to 14.*

I have done my Utmost in Endeavouring to make Use of such Rational cogent Arguments, which I thought might be a Means (with the Blessing of God) of Rooting up and Extricating the Stupidity and Absurdity of stiffnecked Incredulity. The Perverseness and Obstinacy of Deism, that such Deluded unhappy Creatures might be freed from the strong Chains, the heavy Fetters of Unbelief. That the Eyes of their Understandings might be unclos'd, that they might Think Justly, and Act Reasonably, as Accountable Creatures, that they may become Proper Objects of the Divine Complacency, that they may be desirous of Receiving Truth in the Love of it, and by the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit (which will never be wanting to those who apply for it in good earnest,) as Christ himself hath promised. *Mat. vii. 7, 8.* to be Happily
Con-

Converted, so as to become the Disciples
 Indeed of the blessed Jesus. I pray God
 that my Epistle to the Deists may also be a
 Means of undeceiving Practical Atheists and
 Deists, Our fashionable Free Thinkers (or
 rather corrupted vitiated enslav'd Thinkers)
 And for the furthering and promoting of
 Real Vital Christianity in all your Majesty's
 Subjects, being extremely sensible that if
 the Sublimity of the Religion of the Blessed
 Jesus was practis'd thoroughout the World.
 It would then become a Paradise in com-
 parison of what it is at present.

Mankind would then make it their Aim
 and Ambition, their Study and Delight;
 Their earnest Desire and assiduous Endeavour
 to Devise Methods how and in what
 Manner they might become useful and
 Beneficial to each other. "Looking not
 " only on Their own Things, but also on
 " the Things of Others. *Philip ii. 4.*" Con-
 sidering one another to provoke unto Love
 and

and to good Works, *Heb. x. 24.* And would be very mindful, in any wise to rebuke their Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon them, *Levit. xix. 17.* In the Spirit of meekness, *Gal. vi. 1.* That their Love may be without Dissimulation, abhorring all Sin, promoting all Good, Kind and affectionate to all, as Brethren in Honour, preferring each other, *Rom. xii, 9, 10.* No one would then be desirous of vain Glory, Pride would be then Banish'd, it being contrary to the Design and End of Christianity, *Luke i. 51 to 54. ii Tim. iii. 2 to 6. James iv. 10. i Pet. v. 5.* If Mankind would be Governed by the Rules and Directions of the Gospel, then Love and Affection, Unity and Concord, Peace and Tranquillity, Harmony and Joy, would Universally Reign. Then Swords would be turn'd into Plowshares, and Spears into Pruning Hooks, Nation would not lift up Sword against Nation, neither would they have Occasion to learn War
any

more, they would then walk in the Light of the Lord, *Isaiab* ii. 4. 5. Then Judgment would run down our Streets, as Water and Righteousness, as a mighty Stream, as Commanded by God, *Amos* v. 24.

○ That All Professors of Christianity, particularly in your Majesty's Dominions, where the Light and Liberty of the Gospel shines so conspicuously under your Majesty's Auspicious Government had not only the Form of Godliness, but the Power of it Influencing their Thoughts, Words, and Actions, that the Blessings of Heaven might shower down upon the whole World in General, and on your Majesty's Dominions in particular.

With the utmost Humility and Sincerity, I subscribe My Self, Your Majesty's very Affectionate & Obedient Subject, always at your Majesty's Command; (or at any of Your Royal Issues) in every Kind of Thing, that is not contrary to, or Inconsistent with the Precepts of the "*Blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; who Only hath Immortality, dwelling in the Light which no Man can approach unto, whom no Man hath seen, or can see, to whom be Honour and Power Everlasting,*" Amen.
1 *Tim.* vi. 15, 16.

Edward Goldney, *Senr.*

London, Good-Friday,
April 13th, 1759.



THE PROTESTANT HERO, The King of Prussia.



THE INFALLIBLE WORD OF TRUTH. *

Psalms XXXIII. Chapter.

Verse 12. *Blessed is the Nation whose God is the Lord; and the People whom he hath chosen for his own Inheritance.*

v. 13. *The Lord looketh from Heaven; he beholdeth all the Sons of Men.*

v. 16. *There is no King saved by the Multitude of an host.*

Proverbs XX. Chap.

v. 26. *A wise King scattereth the Wicked; and bringeth the Wheel over them.*

v. 28. *Mercy and truth preserve the King; and his Throne is upholden by Mercy.*

THE AUTHOR
GENERAL PREFACE.

To All His Readers.

MY following Works are compos'd from a hearty sincere Principle of real Love and Affection for the Spiritual Benefit and Advantage of all Mankind, particularly to rouse ~~Deists~~ and ~~Heathens~~ out of their stupid dreadful Incredulity, that the ~~Deists~~ may conscientiously act agreeably to all the Moral Obligations of Natural Religion, and the ~~Heathens~~ as *Heathens* indeed, so that they may become proper Objects of the Divine Complacency; That each of them might mend their Ways, the Evil of their Doings, that Almighty God might cause the Cloud and Mist that is before the Eye of their Understanding to vanish, "that they might believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved," ~~Act. xvi. 31.~~ That they may know that the Son of God is come, that He might give them an Understanding, that they might know Him that is True, even Jesus Christ, who is the true God, and Eternal Life; 1 ~~John~~ v. 20.

Likewise that meer nominal Professors of Christianity, (both of the Clergy and Laity,) might not deceive themselves by relying on a Speculative, or Head Belief, and complying with Modes and

P R E F A C E.

Forms of R E L I G I O N, while they are destitute of the Power of it, its Holy Influences, the Soul and Life of Christianity, its very Quintessence, R E L I G I O N I T S E L F, as was the Case of the Hypocritical Pharisees and Scribes, “ who “ honoured God with Their Lips, while their Heart “ was far from Him,” *Mark* vii. 2. to 7.

I have exemplify'd both from Reason and Revelation, that if Professors of Christianity, would be Disciples indeed of the Blessed Jesus, their very Thoughts, Words and Actions, the whole Course and Tenor of their Lives and Conversations must be moved or influenced by the Gospel of Christ, as Watches and Clocks are by their Main Spring, which sets a going all its mechanical Powers in due Order and Regulation.

I have not chosen a florid Language, or a formal concise Method of writing, not endeavouring to tickle the Ear, but to mend the Heart, and have proved from many Passages of Holy Writ, that those Happy Souls, who experience that their corrupted polluted Natures are in a Degree sanctified, that have a Taste and Relish for Righteousness, will earnestly desire and endeavour to grow in Grace, that they will hunger and thirst after it.

For the greater Proficiencies Mankind make in the Spiritual and Divine Life, they will continually

P. R E F A C E.

ally apply to Almighty God for further Degrees of His Rich Grace, in order to make greater Progress, that they may increase in the Fruits of Righteousness, that they may be enriched with every Thing to all Bountifulness, 2 Cor. ix. 11. To be
‘ filled with the Knowledge of God’s Will in all
‘ Wisdom and spiritual Understanding, that they
‘ might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaf-
‘ ing, being fruitful in every good Work, and
‘ increasing in the Knowledge of God; strength-
‘ ned with all Might, according to his glorious
‘ Power, to all Patience and long-suffering with
‘ Joyfulness; Giving Thanks unto the Father
‘ which hath made them meet to be Partakers
‘ of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; who hath
‘ delivered them from the Power of Darkness, and
‘ hath translated them into the Kingdom of His
‘ Dear Son, in whom They have Redemption
‘ through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins,
Coloss. i. 9 to 15,

If any of my fellow Mortals shall receive the least Degree of Spiritual Benefit or Advantage from any of these Works, I most humbly and earnestly beseech them to give Almighty God all the Honour and Praise. “ Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but
“ unto thy Name give Glory. *Pf. cxv. 1.* for it is the Work of Omnipotence only, that causeth
real

P R E F A C E.

real Good to proceed forth from any Human Endeavours whatsoever, yea even from a *Paul* or an *Apolla*. 1 *Cor.* iii. 6, 7. "By Grace Mankind are saved through Faith, and that not of themselves, " it is the Gift of God". *Eph.* ii. 8.

" By the Grace of God I am what I am (says humble. holy Heroick St *Paul*) " and his Grace " which was bestowed on me, was not in vain; but " I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not " I, but the Grace of God, which was with me," 1 *Cor.* xv. 10.

The Principal Human Assistance, I have had to compose my following Works, was a Concordance to the Holy Scriptures, By *Alexander Cruden*, M. A. which very useful valuable Book, (without the least worldly Advantage): I most sincerely and earnestly recommend to the perusal of all those who would willingly take Pleasure and Delight, by being Honoured with a very intimate Correspondence, a beneficial Acquaintance with the Word of God, which is able to make them Wise unto Salvation, through Faith, which is in Christ Jesus, 2 *Tim.* iii. 15. Almighty God grant that this may be the happy Case of us all, is the hearty sincere Prayer of your most Humble Servant's Command, in Christ.

Edward Goldney, Sen^r

London, the Joyous
First of August, 1759. — 6





Rev. II. v10.th
 Be Thou Faithful unto Death,
 And
 I will give Thee a Crown of Life.



GOLDNEY'S EPISTLE

TO THE

DEISTS.

(Those who deny all REVEALED RELIGION, acknowledging only NATURAL; as the Existence of a GOD, his Providence, Virtue and Vice, the Immortality of the Soul, and Rewards and Punishments after Death.)

DEAR FELLOW-CREATURES,

IT is with the greatest sincerity of soul, and a real love and affection from my heart, that I make this address to you, for the benefit of your immortal souls, which you are conscious will be destined to unspeakable happiness or misery at the grand and awful day of judgment, when the whole world will be summoned to give an account of their behaviour in it as rational and accountable creatures.

All mankind, by creation, are the sons and daughters of God, who are made of one blood; consequently
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of one grand family : from which consideration I find an earnest desire in myself to be an instrument in the hands of Providence, to be of as much service to my brethren universally as possible, both for soul and body, as my capacity, situation and circumstances in life will admit of, "whether they are Greeks or Jews, Barbarians, Scythians, bond or free, of every kindred, tongue and nation ;" yea, even if I could suppose them all my enemies. This is the sublime religion I learnt from the glorious gospel of the blessed Jesus ; the satisfaction and pleasure of which no one can conceive, but those who experience it, and have it communicated by its divine author Christ, "the only begotten Son of God," John xiv. 21. Therefore I should rejoice that you experienced the same divine pleasures which are the happy consequences of knowing "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent ; whom to know is life eternal," John xvii. 3. The blessed Jesus declares, "his doctrine was not his own, but God's that sent him ; and that if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether he spake of himself. He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory : but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him," John vii. 16, 17, 18, which single consideration is an invincible argument of the divine authority and mission of the blessed Jesus, to every rational, unprejudiced mind.

The whole scope and design of the doctrine which Christ delivered, eminently tends to promote the glory of God, and the universal good of mankind. This is
an

an undoubted proof and evidence that his doctrine was only from heaven.

It is declared by divine authority, that the reason or cause why you, the Jews, or any other part of mankind do not believe in Christ, is for want of doing the will of God : which is implied in our Lord's answer to the Jews, recorded John vii. 17. I make no manner of doubt but that you will readily answer me, and say, If mankind were to judge of the truth of Christianity by the professors thereof, the practice of many heathens would be much more preferable to theirs ; which is too notorious to be denied, but must be acknowledged as a lamentable truth, even amongst many who make the greatest pretences to it. But this is not to be attributed to the doctrine of the gospel, which absolutely assures us, that every one who wilfully lives in " the breach of " any one single command, is guilty of the whole : " and that it is " not the hearers of the law, but the " doers of the law, who shall be justified ; and that not " every one that saith unto Christ, Lord, Lord, shall " enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth " the will of his heavenly father."

Therefore St. Paul cautions mankind, lest they should deceive themselves, and says, " Know ye not that the " unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ; " neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, " abusers of themselves with mankind ; nor thieves, nor " covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Those professing Christians who live in an avowed commission of any of these, or

any other sins or vices, may be said to be only speculative believers, for their faith reaches the head, but not the heart : they are only nominal Christians ; but far from being the disciples indeed of the blessed Jesus, and will “ receive their portion with unbelievers,” Luke xii. 46. Therefore my principal design, by the grace of God, is to propose and point out such methods, whereby you may become proper objects to receive evangelical faith.

The first virtue I would recommend to you is humility, a humble apprehension of the weakness and insufficiency of your own understandings, to comprehend those things which do not fall under our senses ; to be of a self-diffident disposition, your minds always flexible, open to conviction, always willing and ready to receive and embrace the truth in the love of it. I would also heartily and sincerely recommend the necessary duty of self-examination ; not in a slight, cursory manner, but with the greatest deliberation and impartiality, as an affair of the utmost importance. It being of the greatest consequence, whether you have or have not acted agreeably to the laws of natural religion ; whether you do constantly live in the true fear and reverence of the Lord of heaven and earth. Whether you do govern your corrupt, unruly, headstrong passions by your reason, which almighty God has invested you with for that excellent purpose : whether in every respect you do to others, as you would have others do to you : whether you are of a compassionate, sympathising, tender-hearted disposition : whether you do not do any injury to your fellow-creatures : but, on the contrary, do you
do

do them all the good your circumstances and situation of life will admit of ?

These, you must acknowledge, are the duties of natural religion.

Examine yourselves, whether you have given that due attention, that just regard, to the external evidences to the truth of divine revelation, as the importance of it demands. Have you thoroughly weighed the authenticity of the writings of Moses and the prophets ? with what exceeding great care they were preserved from one generation to another ; and how the Jews had in their custody copies of all the laws, in so exact a manner, as not to suffer a single point either to be added to them, or taken from them, on any consideration whatsoever.

Have you considered, that these writings contain not only their laws, or their institutional rites and ceremonies, and their religious observances from time to time, and how they kept the passover as a memorial of the death of the first-born in Egypt ; and that the same day, all the first-born of Israel, both man and beast, were by a perpetual law dedicated to God, and the Levites taken for all the first-born of the children of Israel, Numb. viii. 17, 18 ? that Aaron's rod which budded, was preserved in the ark, in memory of the rebellion, and wonderful destruction of Korah, Dathan and Abiram ; and for a confirmation of the priesthood to the family of Aaron ? also the pot of manna, in memory of the children of Israel's being supported by manna from heaven, in a very miraculous manner, forty years together,

ther, while they were in the wilderness? that the brazen serpent was also preserved, in memory of those admirable cures it performed on all those who were bit by the fiery serpent, whenever they looked on it, Numb. xxi. 9. which serpent remained to the days of Hezekiah, their good young king, who destroyed it, because they idolized, and burnt incense to it? 2 Kings xviii. 4. They kept the feasts of the Passover, of Pentecost, and the feast of Tabernacles,

The Passover was celebrated in memory of that wonderful and grand deliverance out of Egypt, Deut. v. 15. Their number was no less than "six hundred thousand" and three thousand and five hundred and fifty" souls, Numb. i. 46. Their daily sacrifices, and yearly expiations, their new moons, and several feasts and fasts, were repeated remembrances of these remarkable events. Have you considered that the children of Israel, with the ark of the Lord, passed over the river Jordan on dry land, to the number of forty thousand; on which Joshua caused twelve stones to be erected at Gilgal, in memory of so wonderful a providence? and that, when their children in future ages should ask the meaning of it, it should be told them, that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord: "when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off, and these stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever". Joshua iv. 7.

The book of the law was not only a history of real matters of facts, of what things were done from time to

to time, but it contained fixed municipal laws and statutes of the nation of the Jews, which were equally obligatory both on king and people.

That they had all been circumcised, and constantly circumcised their children, in obedience to the commands in the law of Moses; that they had never eaten any swine's flesh, or other meats prohibited in the law; that they had a magnificent tabernacle; that a particular tribe (of Levi) was appointed and consecrated by God, as his priests; by whose hands, and none other, the sacrifices of the people were to be offered, and those solemn institutions to be celebrated; that it was death for any other to approach the altar; that their high priest wore a glorious mitre, and magnificent robes of God's ordaining, with the miraculous Urim and Thummim in his breast-plate, whence the divine responses were given; that at his word the king and all the people were to go out and come in, Numb. xxi. 21. These priests were their ordinary judges, even in civil matters, therefore it was not possible to have persuaded a whole nation, that they had known and practised all these ordinances, if they had not; or either to have received and acknowledged the books of Moses for truth, which declared they had practised them, appealing to that practice, if it was not fact; which is absurd to suppose, and which every rational mind will acknowledge.

The few scattered, dispersed Jews now remaining in the world, who recognize many of the customs and ceremonies of their forefathers, are living testimonies of
Judaism,

Judaism, as the sacred established laws under the old dispensation, and their sacred records, do testify the truth of the new dispensation, under the glorious gospel of the Messiah, which is foretold and prophesied of in the Old Testament in many places.

Therefore you will do yourselves justice, if you will be very careful to examine and compare the prophecies that are there of the Messiah, with the fulfilment of them, as recorded by the four poor honest disinterested evangelists, relating to time, place, and all other circumstances in the person, birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of the blessed Jesus, as recorded in the New Testament, in which there is no possibility of deceit or imposture. Old prophecies, recorded for two thousand years, (and all so agreeing) could not have been contrived to countenance a falsity; therefore nothing could be a falsity that could so completely fulfil all those things relating to the Messiah, the Son of the living God; Jesus of Nazareth, in the days of king Herod.

That there were such persons in his reign as John, whose surname was Baptist, and one whom they called Jesus, is manifest and evident from Flavius Josephus, a faithful Jewish historian, who recorded, " That it was
 " the opinion of numbers of the Jews, that Herod's
 " army was overthrown by the just vengeance of God,
 " who punished him most deservedly, by reason of the
 " execution he caused to be done on John, surnamed
 " Baptist, by putting him to death: a man who was

" re-

“ replenished with all virtue, and who exhorted the
 “ Jews to addict themselves thereto, and to execute
 “ justice towards man, and piety towards God. Ex-
 “horting them to be baptized; telling them that bap-
 “tism should at that time be agreeable unto God, if
 “ they should not only renounce their sins; but if,
 “ to the purity of their bodies, they should annex the
 “ cleanness of their souls, repurified by justice: and
 “ whereas it came to pass that divers flocked and fol-
 “ lowed him, to hear his doctrine, Herod feared lest
 “ his subjects, allured by his doctrine and perswa-
 “ sions, should be drawn to revolt: for it seems they
 “ would subscribe in all things to his advice. There-
 “ fore he thought it better, (to prevent any ill con-
 “ sequence) to put him to death; than to expect some
 “ sudden commotion, which afterwards he might re-
 “ pent of. Upon this suspicion Herod caused him to
 “ be bound, and sent to the castle of Macheron, and
 “ there he was put to death.” (Vid. Lodge’s Josephus
 Antiq. book XVIII. chap. 7.) And in the same book
 (ch. 4.) relating to the rebellion of the Jews, against
 Pontius Pilate, who was at the same time governor
 of Judea, the same historian, has recorded, “ At
 “ that time was Jesus, a wise man, (if it be lawful to
 “ call him a man) for he was the performer of divers
 “ admirable works, and the instructor of those who wil-
 “ lingly entertained the truth, and he drew unto him
 “ divers Jews and Greeks to be his followers. This
 “ was Christ, who being accused by the princes of our
 “ nation before Pilate, and afterwards condemned to
 “ the cross by him, yet did not those who followed him
 “ from the beginning, forbear to love him, for notwith-
 “ standing

“ standing the ignominy of his death : for he appeared
 “ to them alive the third day after, according as the
 “ prophets had before testified the same, and divers
 “ divine wonderful things of him, and from that time
 “ forward the race of the Christians, who have de-
 “ rived their name from him, hath never ceased.”

This faithful Jewish historian was a disinterested author, therefore must be very reasonably supposed to write nothing but truth, which agrees with the four Evangelists ; two of whom, viz. St. Matthew and St. John, were eye and ear witnesses : the others, St. Mark and St. Luke, wrote what they had perfect knowledge of, from those who were eye and ear witnesses, St. Mark from St. Peter's mouth, he being the disciple and companion of St. Peter. St. Luke, the beloved physician and companion of St. Paul, in the first four verses of his gospel, acquaints us with the reasons which induced him to write, which were, because divers persons in that age, had imprudently and inconsiderately set upon writing of gospels, without direction from the spirit of God, whose errors and mistakes were to be corrected by a true narrative : this St. Luke declares he was able to make, having had perfect understanding and knowledge of the truth of those things he was about to relate, partly by his familiarity with St. Paul, and partly by his conversation with the other apostles, who constantly attended the blessed Jesus, and were eye and ear witnesses of those things that are the subject matter of his gospel.

And in the three other gospels of the evangelists there can be nothing of fallibility or uncertainty in them,

them, by reason they wrote nothing but what they either heard or saw themselves; and what they heard, they received from those that were eye and ear witnesses of the matter of fact it contains:

Please to reflect, and consider impartially and seriously, that these four historians had not the least worldly interest or advantage to be answered by writing, publishing and propagating the gospel of their despised lord and master Jesus Christ; but on the contrary they were forewarned by him, that they should be hated by mankind for his name's sake, and be persecuted and delivered up to the synagogue, and scourged, and sent to prison, and brought before kings and rulers.

Therefore he most tenderly cautions them, for to beware of men: "Behold (says he) I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," Matt. x. 16. They were to provide "neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in their purses; nor scrip for their journey; neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves," Matt. v. 10. They were not commissioned by their lord and master to set out in the world for the reformation of mankind on any lucrative views, but quite the contrary; which they readily and cheerfully embraced with magnanimity and fortitude, going through numberless fatigues and hardships, persecutions, imprisonments and scourgings, and at last sealed the truth of their gospels with their blood; attesting it by the sacrifice of all that was near and dear to them, even their own lives.

Therefore the authenticity of their writings must be out of all doubt with every upright, sincere, unprejudiced mind, who attentively and thoroughly weighs all circumstances concomitant. The propagation of the glorious gospel of the blessed Jesus, the benefits and advantages which accrue to mankind from his grand embassy; the tendency his most pure and holy doctrines has to make them happy in this world, and to qualify them to be meet partakers for unspeakable glory and happiness, "such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Cor. ii. 9. are arguments, one would think, sufficient to convince any reasonable mind of the truth of Christianity.

At the august proclamation of the blessed Jesus's nativity, the harmless shepherds were struck with a panic at such a sudden visit of the heavenly messenger, attended with such brilliancy, who said unto them, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," Luk. ii. 9, 10, 11. At which joyful occasion immediately a multitude of the heavenly host joined chorus, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men," ver. 13, 14. Soon after the inhuman tyrant, bloody king Herod, apprehended that he was born, he endeavoured to have him murdered by a general massacre, which he caused to be executed

executed on all the children that were in Bethlehem,
 " and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and
 " under," Matt. ii. 16. So likewise the hypocritical
 magistrates and superstitious high priests with great
 rage and malice did all in their power to stifle Christianity
 in its dawn, which evidently appears in the following
 sacred history, as recorded in Acts iv. 6 to 13. which I
 earnestly recommend to your examination, it containing
 undeniable evidences of the veracity of the Christian
 religion. For if these narratives had been spurious,
 worldly power and policy would have detected and
 suppressed them: " but all things must be fulfilled
 " which were written in the law of Moses, and in the
 " prophets, and in the psalms concerning him," Luke
 xxiv. 44.

Therefore the angel of the Lord proclaimed his name
 Jesus, because he was to save his people from their
 sins. Agreeable thereto, as a preparatory for this most
 gracious design, John the Baptist, as a presage,
 preached repentance, baptizing those who confessed
 their sins, Matthew iii. 2. 6. Declaring to them, " he
 " only baptized them with water unto repentance,
 " but he that cometh after me, is mightier than I,
 " whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, he shall bap-
 " tize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire," Matthew
 iii. 11.

When the self-conceited superstitious Pharisees saw that
 the blessed Jesus did not disdain and reject the company
 of publicans and sinners, they asked his disciples the
 meaning of it: on which he discovered a most friendly
 good

good disposition, assuring them, “ he came not to call
 “ the righteous, but sinners to repentance,” Matth.
 ix. 13. that is, his business was to act as a wise, skilful
 physician, to endeavour the cure of those who were
 really spiritually sick. “ They that be whole need not a
 “ physician, but they that are sick, ver. 12.

In his most excellent sermon on the mount he in-
 formed his auditory, that he would by no means have
 them to imagine he came to disannul any moral obliga-
 tion, or set aside any of the predictions of the holy pro-
 phets, but to compleat them, and to give mankind
 more exalted ideas of the moral precepts, then what
 was generally understood to be implied in them, by
 those who regarded principally the letter, or ritual part
 of them.

The blessed Jesus always undeceived hypocritical pre-
 tenders to religion, assuring mankind, “ That except
 “ their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of
 “ the scribes and pharisees, they should in no case enter
 “ into the kingdom of heaven, Matt. v. 20. and that
 “ not every one that saith unto him Lord, Lord, shall
 “ enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth
 “ the will of his father which is heaven, Matt. vii. 21.
 “ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath
 “ appeared to all men, teaching us that denying un-
 “ godliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,
 “ righteously and godly in this present world, look-
 “ ing for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of
 “ the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave
 “ himself for us, that he might redeem us from all ini-
 “ quity,

"quity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works," Titus ii. 11, 12, 13, 14. For as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, 1 Peter i. 15. Therefore mankind is cautioned of receiving any misrepresentation of the gospel of Christ. Let no man deceive you, he that doeth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning; for this purpose the son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 7, 8, that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage, Heb. ii. 14, 15. wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on all men, for that all sinned, Rom. v. 12. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our lord, ver. 21. Who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality: so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption; and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 53 to 58. Thus death

death is subdued, overcome and conquered, and life and immortality brought to light by the gospel. Therefore you must acknowledge, that if you believed these declarations to be of divine authority, you would think them very comfortable, glorious, beneficial discoveries indeed, as they graciously point out a most admirable method to extricate mankind from their sins, and to obtain the favour of God, and free them from the fear of death, removing its most dreadful sting; thereby giving them a right and title to heaven victoriously through our lord Jesus Christ; which is an infinitely greater conquest than all the heathen philosophers pretended to, or even had any idea of.

If you think justly, you must be sensible that mere natural religion is very deficient in these most important concerns. How you should get above the fears of death; how the Deity will be appeased for your sins; whether happiness or misery will be the portion of your immortal souls.

You know the wisest men among the heathens discovered but a very faint glimmering light, which now and then darted out from their most abstracted reasonings.

If you are sincere and honest, you will acknowledge that natural religion has received great advantage by the moonlight of Moses and the prophets, and the sunshine of Christ and his apostles: therefore let me beseech you not to deceive your own souls, vainly imagining that reason has not been enlightened by revelation.

Well

Well might St. Paul say, " That this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15.

How insignificant and tasteless are all the refined discoveries of philosophy, compared to this single divine declaration ! Therefore St. Paul came to an excellent determination, built on a solid foundation, " Not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2. Christ crucified will be the divine theme, which victorious souls will be contemplating on to all eternity. This cures the soul of all its maladies and distempers: other knowledge makes mens minds flighty, giddy and unsteady : this settles and composes them. Other knowledge is apt to swell mankind with high conceits and opinions of their own abilities : this brings them to the just apprehension of themselves, makes them meek and lowly in heart. Other knowledge leaves mens hearts as they found them; This changes them and makes them better.

Such a transcendent excellency is there in the knowledge of Christ Jesus our lord. Therefore good old Simeon, as soon as he saw him, proclaimed God's salvation, who was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, by discovering to them righteousness and true holiness, and to be the glory of the people Israel,

If you will carefully examine the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, you will find them to have a ten-



dency to make mankind comfortable in this life, and to render them compleatly happy after death. Read the New Testament with a candid disposition, and you will find throughout the whole, that both the affirmative and negative precept have this tendency; the affirmative commanding holiness in general, inculcating one or more particular virtues or habits, or means and helps to the acquiring, supporting or increasing them; such as reading, hearing the word of God, ~~prayer~~, meditation, a good conscience, watchfulness ~~again~~st temptations, avoiding the occasions of evil.

The negative precepts of the gospel do forbid the contrary, to some or other of those duties either directly or indirectly, immediately or mediately, in its own nature, or by reason of some circumstance, to the depravation of our souls in rendering us wicked, or in some degree or other less holy; for there is not any thing in itself in all respects innocent or harmless that is forbidden; and there is not one thing commanded, that is not upon its own account, or some one or other account, greatly for our advantage, ornamenting human nature, raising its dignity towards her original rectitude, even to the highest degree of perfection.

If these assertions are true, which I will soon demonstrate to every rational mind, you must acknowledge the religion of the blessed Jesus comes from God only, because God is the origin of all goodness; who is goodness itself, all perfection; consequently any discovery which hath a tendency to promote godlikeness in any of his reasonable creatures, who were originally made
after

after his own likeness, must necessarily come from him; consequently it must be well pleasing to him that all his reasonable creatures attend to it as his voice, and obey it as his command.

The clearer any discovery of the divine mind and will is communicated to mankind, a more near resemblance of it must reasonably, yea necessarily, be expected by him from us.

When one of the scribes perceived the blessed Jesus answered the sadduces, relating to the resurrection so well, he enquired of him which was the first commandment of all. The blessed Jesus informed him, the first of all the commandments is this : " Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord ; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This is the first commandment, and the second is like, namely this, " Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." " There is none other commandment greater than these," Mark xii. 28 to 35. To love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength, is to love him in the greatest degree possible, and with every power, faculty and ability we are invested with. This is the first principle both of natural and revealed religion. The blessed Jesus told the scribe the second was like it, but did not say equal to it, though the duty is of the same authority, of the same need. For as no one can be saved without the love of God, so neither can any one be saved without the love of their neighbour : the supremacy of our love un-

doubtedly is due to God, and the greatest fervency of all our affections, and our thoughts and desires, ought ever to be towards him, our minds and understandings meditating on him, our wills voluntarily choosing him, and delighting to obey him.

To love God supremely is to love him without any manner of restriction, above all degree, and is a duty of such absolute necessity, and so indispensable, that he himself cannot exempt us from the obligation of it. So long as he is God, and we are dependent creatures, we shall always lie under a natural and necessary obligation to love and obey him.

This therefore is the greatest commandment, and our highest duty. And we are certain that when faith shall be turned into vision, and hope into fruition, that love to God will then be in its greatest perfection, or be compleated in enjoyment.

To love our neighbour as ourselves, is to be understood after the like manner that we love ourselves; but not in the same degree, tho' with the same kind of love that we love ourselves. As we love ourselves freely and readily, sincerely and unfeignedly, tenderly, compassionately, and constantly; so should we love our neighbour also. Though we love him not as much as we love ourselves, yet we ought to love him as truly as we love ourselves. Therefore love to God, our neighbour, and selves, are things inseparable.

There is no command in divine revelation which expresses a man should love himself; for the light of
nature

nature dictates, and the law of nature obliges every man so to do; it being an innate principle in him, planted by his Creator; and indeed self-love and self-preservation is a natural instinct in all creatures, peculiarly in mankind. But the sublimest of all the christian virtues and graces consists in universal goodness; a disinterested love and affection to all mankind in the greatest degree possible.

The complete and perfect pattern of this divine virtue is Christ himself, who, in his most incomparable sermon on the mount, instructed all those who were willing to become his real and genuine disciples, “to love
“ their enemies; to bless those that curs’d them; to do
“ good to them that hated them; to pray for them
“ which despitefully used them, and persecuted them,”
Matth. v. 44.

This is the refined religion of the blessed Jesus, and what he inculcated on all those who would become his disciples indeed. This is the sublime religion he practised, both living and dying, and in the most perfect manner possible.

Let me ask you now in the name of truth and goodness, does natural religion teach these godlike virtues and graces in the like manner? No, no. And besides, is there not too much of a dislike and aversion to them in human nature?

How do you find yourselves disposed towards them? are these sublime doctrines consonant to your reason?

and does your reason instruct you to put them in practice?----Is it possible to learn this religion from the most refined maxims of the wisest of mankind among the heathen philosophers? No, no, you must acknowledge that all the most purified philosophy in all ages of the world put together, could never have taught mankind to "love their enemies, to bless those that curs'd them; to do good to those that hated them; to pray for those that despitefully used them, and persecuted them," Matth. v. 44.

I hope the eyes of your understandings begin now to be opened; and that you are sensible what infinite obligations mankind are under to the only begotten Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person, and whom the angels worship.

That Deity should humble himself so astonishingly as to take on him human nature, and become man, by being born of a poor virgin, and live on earth for a time, in order to propagate these glorious doctrines for the good and benefit of poor mortals, by his most excellent instructions and example! Let me earnestly beseech you, as reasonable and accountable creatures, to hearken and attend to them. Listen to those instructions with that awfulness and solemnity, as you would if God spake vocally from heaven to you. Hark, God speaks, "LOVE YOUR ENEMIES."

Here the inward affection of your soul is required, as well as the outward behaviour of common civility:
Bless

“ Bless them that curse you.” There outward civility and affability is required, as well as inward affection. “ Do good to them that hate you. Here all acts of kindness and real benefit, on every occasion, are required of us, to be done to our most implacable enemies. “ Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you:” that is, such persons as may be possessed of the greatest degree of enmity that can be, such as includes malice, revenge and cruelty, of the most malignant kind possible, we are to show no ill will towards them; but on the contrary such a good will, as to pray sincerely for them.

The blessed author of this sublime religion not only proclaimed these heavenly divine doctrines to the ears of mankind, but exemplified them in his own practice, in the most perfect and complete manner, to his dying moment, even while his most inveterate and implacable enemies were murdering him, by putting him to the cruel, painful death of the cross, nailing his blessed hands and feet thereto, piercing his sacred side with a spear; letting out his most precious, invaluable blood, John xix. 34.

Notwithstanding all this unparalleled and shocking barbarity, he cried out saying, “ Father, forgive them, “ for they know not what they do,” Luke xxiii. 34. leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps, “ who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. “ Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when “ he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself “ to him that judgeth righteously: who his own

~~D 4~~

“ self

“ self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that
 “ we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness,
 “ by whose stripes we are healed,” 1 Pet. ii. 21 to 25.

Let us reason now on this most important, self-inter-
 resting subject. Can any of the human race that are
 in their senses imagine, that this Jesus of Nazareth was
 an impostor, a hypocritical wicked man? Was it possible
 for him, if he was not more than man, to encounter
 with such diabolical malice, and bear such cruelty with
 so much patience, long suffering, and goodness, as he
 did, even so as to pray for his very murderers? Surely
 flesh and blood is not equal to this. *

Reflect; consider, if he was not that very person
 whom he so frequently declared himself to be, (“ Christ
 “ the son of the living God, who came forth from
 “ the Father, and who thought it not robbery to be
 “ equal with him, who dwelt in the Father, and the
 “ Father in him”) he must be the very vilest of im-
 postors, a blasphemer in the highest degree possible.
 But your reason must inform you to the contrary. If
 you will sincerely and thoroughly weigh all the cir-
 cumstances relating to his birth, life, death, resurrec-
 tion, and ascension, you will have the highest reason
 to believe, that he was not only an exceeding good
 man, but Deity united to humanity; strictly and pro-
 perly God and Man. Therefore be no longer faithless,
 but believing.

In order to animate, and quicken, to encourage,
 and engage mankind to that most exalted, amiable duty

* - Why? why? because Jesus is united to God of
 the essence of the same divinity.

of loving their enemies, the blessed Jesus propounds the example of God himself for their imitation, " who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust," *
 Matt. v. 45. Therefore the blessed Jesus must be understood to mean, by becoming the children of our heavenly father, his spiritual children by regeneration; that they may know and experience that they are his adopted children, by their likeness to him and imitation of him. For the very best evidence mankind can have of their being his spiritual children, is by their conformity to his most holy laws, particularly in those brilliant properties of universal love and goodness, kindness and forgiveness.

We daily and hourly find that God doth good to them that live without him in the world; that is, who have him not in all their thoughts, unless it be with irreverence, when they blaspheme, and take his most sacred and holy name in vain, having not the fear of God. That neither pray to him, or praise him for any of his mercies, blessings, and comforts of life; though he is continually sending them his enlivening beneficial sun, and fruitful, refreshing, cooling rain, and permitting them to enjoy perfect health and strength, peace and plenty, faring sumptuously every day: " yet they make gold their hope, and have said to the fine gold, thou art my confidence; and rejoice because their wealth is great, and because their hand have gotten much: who are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and

* how is not the time of ^{whose} trial -
 it is the time of probation -

“ whose glory is their shame ; who mind “ earthly
 “ things, Philip. iii. 18, 19. who despise the poor, James
 “ ii. 6. Having respect to persons,” ver. 9. There-
 fore the blessed Jesus gives a reason why christians
 should not be so mean-spirited as to confine their love
 to those who only loved them, and be complaisant and
 obliging to those who were so to them. “ If ye love
 “ them which love you, (says he) what reward have ye ?
 “ Do not even the publicans the same ; if ye salute your
 “ brethren only, what do ye more than others ? do
 “ not even the publicans so ?” Matt. v. 46, 47. As
 if the blessed Jesus had said, Heathens by the light of
 nature are inclined to love those who love them, yea
 publicans, and even the very worst of sinners do so :
 but my religion instructs you in more noble and ge-
 nerous principles ; “ I say unto you love your ene-
 “ mies.” All mankind universally, without excep-
 tion.

Love for love is only common justice, reciprocal
 civility ; but love for no love is favour and kindness ;
 and love for hatred and enmity, is divine goodness,
 a most glorious disposition ; godlikeness, which has a
 tendency to render mankind illustrious on earth, and
 glorious in heaven. Therefore this exalted religion is to
 be learnt only from the sublime precepts of the gospel.

But alas, alas, if we consider all the denominati-
 ons of christians in every christian country, as one
 community, to our grief and unspeakable shame it
 must be acknowledged, little, very little of this God-
 like, Christ-like religion, is practised among the ge-
 nerality

nerality of those who call themselves by the holy and most venerable name of christians ; yea, even among many who make the highest professions of it.

On the contrary, how frequently among such is there to be found, luke-warm love, coldness and indifference, shyness and unsociableness, haughtiness and pride, variance and strife, enmity and hatred ? yea even frequently amongst relations and professed friends ; oftentimes occasioned by a little misunderstanding of one another, each acting agreeable to their private sentiments or judgment of things, and varying from each other, which is occasioned by one cause or circumstance or other, not knowable by each, and by perceiving and viewing of things in different lights, consequently acting on different principles and motives ; some through ignorance, some for selfish views, others for more generous views ; some to please their fellow mortals, others to please Almighty God.

What a number of professing christians is to be found, who are so narrow spirited and mean, as to confine their love to little sects and parties ; and from those unchristian springs flows that bitterness of spirit, which discovers itself by one party's uncharitable censures, and unchristian behaviour to the other.

The ill effects, for instance, of elections for representatives in parliament in England, for most of our boroughs, towns, and cities, most lamentably testifies the truth of this observation.

If real christian principles governed mankind, and a true catholic spirit reigned, (not a papist spirit) how happy would mankind in general find themselves to what they now are! We should then live heaven-like. For this cause, the blessed Jesus has commanded us, "to be perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. v. 48. That is, we ought to endeavour, to the very utmost of our power, to make all the christian heroic virtues and divine graces compleat and perfect, in being very careful, in exercising of them minutely in every situation and circumstance of life, ever having the honour and glory of God, and the good of our fellow-creatures at heart.

To be perfect as our heavenly father, in the strictest literal sense, is impossible, as to degree and equality. "Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea the heavens are not clean in his sight, Job xv. 15. And his angels he chargeth with folly," Job iv. 18. The original word rendered in St. Matthew's gospel perfect, Matt. v. 48. is in St. Luke's gospel rendered merciful, Luke vi. 36. denoting that charity is the very perfection of all christian graces.

Those who are by the rich favour and grace of God become perfect in love, are perfect in all divine graces in God's account. Therefore, in order to be a throughout compleat christian, so as to obtain eternal salvation, we are to press forward toward the mark of perfection, "for the prize of the high calling

“ calling of God in Christ Jesus,” Philip. iii. 14, 15. Because the blessed Jesus’s religion demands of us not only holiness in our words and actions, but also holiness in our thoughts and affections, for all sincere christians are to “ worship God in spirit and “ in truth, for God seeketh such to worship him,” John iv. 23. Therefore such persons as are possessed of a right frame and disposition, both of heart and mind; their thoughts must be pure and holy, not cherishing or indulging any sin; for the purity and spirituality of the law of Christ, condemns speculative wantonness, equal with practical uncleanness, and forbids not only the outward action, but the secret purpose and intention, and first out-goings of the soul, after unlawful objects. For the blessed Jesus has positively declared, “ that whosoever looketh on a woman to “ lust after her, hath committed adultery already with “ her in his heart,” Matt. v. 28. He has also pronounced malice equal to murder, and coveting and defrauding, and an inordinate love to this world’s goods, equal to the sin of procuring them by unjustifiable means; therefore the blessed Jesus has commanded us, “ that if our right eye or right “ hand offend us, to pluck it out, and cut it off,” Matt. v. 29, 30. Which words cannot, by any reasonable mind, be understood in the literal sense of the expression, as if the blessed, tender-hearted, compassionate Jesus had commanded us to destroy our bodily members, which are so useful and beneficial, to render our lives comfortable, and indeed so necessary to so many millions, that they could not get their bread
by

by the sweat of their brow, without the use of them. Therefore we must understand these our blessed Lord's commands in a spiritual sense, which is to mortify the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, which otherwise will prove a very dangerous snare to the soul. When therefore we find the view of an' ensnaring object will inflame us, we must make "a covenant with our eyes," Job xxxi. 1. so as not to look on it, which will answer the same end as if our eyes were out.

The surest and safest method mankind can take, in order to be kept from the outward act of sin is, (through the grace of God) to mortify their inward affections and love to it, which would be an infallible method of destroying of it in the root, before it springs up; and when our inward affections are mortified, and we have an absolute aversion to vicious inclinations, the organs of our bodily sight, and the use of our limbs may be preserved, by reason they will be no longer weapons of sin, but instruments of righteousness unto holiness. Therefore a sedate, sober, thinking mind, will acknowledge that there is a great deal of reason or cause why their very thoughts and inward workings of their mind, should be under some laws and restraints.

Disorderly, wicked thoughts and affections, are the immediate corrupters of our natural faculties; therefore it is equally requisite, in order for mankind to become holy, that their thoughts should come under subjection, as well as words and actions. The blessed Je-
sus

fus having assured us, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; "that a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things, and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things," Matt. xii. 34, 35. The heart could not receive it, unless the thoughts conveyed it. Therefore it is extremely evident, that restraints against wicked words and actions would be of little or no service, if mankind was left at liberty as to their thoughts and affections. For instance, would it not be of little or no signification to command mankind not to do evil, if it was lawful for them to think of evil, and so be induced to the love of it? The thoughts of sin may be very significantly compared to a spark of fire, which if not immediately extinguished, but nourished, will soon burst out in a flame: from the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and very frequently cause the eyes, hands, and feet to act.

If you believed in divine revelation, the infallible declarations of the holy spirit, I could give you some excellent spiritual counsel deduced from thence, which would be a happy means of putting you in possession of good thoughts and desires, and to extricate evil ones. Being now extremely willing that you all should embrace the word of God, and become real christians, the disciples indeed of the blessed Jesus, I will lay before you a few choice maxims exceeding well worth your notice and observation, for the happy government of your thoughts, words, and actions;

actions; which is, to follow the example of the royal penitent, holy David, a man after God's own heart, Acts xiii. 22. Who made a resolution, "to take heed to his ways, that he sinned not with his tongue, by keeping his mouth with a bridle," Psalm xxxix. 1. Who delighted in God's statutes, "and forgot not his word, Psalm cxix. 16. That he thought on his ways, and turned his feet unto his testimonies, and made haste and delayed not to keep his commandments, ver. 59, 60. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with me, ver. 97, 98. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path, ver. 105. I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love, ver. 113. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold; therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way, ver. 127, 128. Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it, ver. 140. Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word, ver. 148. Thy word is true from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever, ver. 160. I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments. Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them, ver. 163, 164, 165. For blessed is he whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law

" doth

“ doth he meditate day and night; for he shall be
 “ like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that
 “ bringeth forth his fruit in season; his leaf also shall
 “ not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

Pfalm i. 2, 3. If you will exercise your thoughts as the royal Psalmist did, and delight to meditate on the word of God, “ your thoughts will be established, Prov. xvi. 3.

The purity and excellency of the blessed Jesus's religion requires of us not only good thoughts, words and actions, but that we should think, speak and act from good principles; “ not as pleasing men, but God, “ which trieth our hearts,” 1 Theff. ii. 4. Therefore “ whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to “ do all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. Not having men's persons in admiration, because of advantage, Jude xvi. But in any wise to rebuke our neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him, Lev. xix. 17. “ That every man may please his neighbour for his “ good to edification,” Rom. xv. 2.

But the fashionable way of the world is to please their neighbour, if it is to their hurt; especially if they possibly can receive the least benefit and advantage thereby: not seeking their wealth, but their own; not seeking them but theirs, directly opposite both to the command and example of St Paul, recorded 1 Cor. x. 24. 2 Cor. xii. 14. The author of the Hebrews has directed us to “ consider one another; “ to provoke unto love and good works,” Heb. x. 24. To consider one another, is to be understood to watch over one another. This exhortation respects both the virtues and vices mankind are subject to, and

likewise their temptations and dangers ; which temptations and dangers shews the necessity of all those mutual duties of warning, exhorting, and admonishing one another.

It is very much to be lamented that these beneficial duties are so generally neglected, and indeed almost lost amongst christians ; and with them the vital part, the glory of the christian religion, departed from us. This is required of the disciples indeed of the blessed Jesus, as we may learn from Philip. ii. 4. and Heb. x. 24. That the consideration, observation, and mutual watch of christians over each other, and also exhortation and encouragement unto gospel duties, is necessarily required as a special means for their preservation in the true christian faith.

The duty commanded is to provoke, and be provoked, unto love and good works : for that is no true evangelical faith, which is separated from love : and that is no true love that is separated from any acts of kindness, benevolence, and doing good on all occasions when opportunity presents, especially to the household of faith, Gal. vi. 9, 10. The grand end of christian communion was intended to excite and stir up to love, which ought to be the glorious spring, and uncorrupted fountain of all good works, it being the genuine fruit and effect of our unfeigned love to God. This is to act from right principles and motives ; to make the honour and glory of God our grand aim, our ultimate end in all our desires and wishes, in all our intentions and determinations, in all our words and actions.

A real

A real christian will perform all his natural actions to spiritual purposes, for spiritual ends : he will not only be very thankful while he is refreshing his body with his daily food ; but he will have an eye, that by those blessings of refreshment he may be strengthened and enabled thereby for serving of God, both with his body and spirit, in all the actions of human life, because he well knows, that to do all to the honour and glory of God, as he is instructed, is applicable to every kind of action. Therefore St. Peter hath commanded christians, “ to gird the loins of their mind, “ to be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that “ is to be brought unto them by the revelation of “ Jesus Christ, as obedient children, not fashioning “ themselves, according to the former lusts in their “ ignorance, but as Christ, which hath called them “ is holy ; so they are to be holy in all manner of “ conversation, because it is written, be ye holy, for I “ am holy,” 1 Peter i. 13 to 17.

Christians are not only to make God the pattern of their holiness, but the grand motive to it, he being the perfection of holiness.

The very first man God created was in his own likeness, resembling him in purity and holiness : but man soon divested himself of it, by disregarding God’s law, and thereby became the original cause of all the unholiness in his posterity ; the fountain being corrupted, the streams became polluted. “ Doth the fountain send forth at the same place sweet

" water and bitter ? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear
 " olive-berries ? either a vine figs ? so can no foun-
 " tain both yield salt water and fresh, Jam. iii. 11, 12.
 " Therefore all mankind by nature are corrupt, are all
 " together become filthy, Ps. xiv. 1. 3. and therefore by
 " nature are the children of wrath," Eph. ii. 3. Which
 was the reason the blessed Jesus told Nicodemus, " That
 " except a man be born again, he cannot see the king-
 " dom of God," John iii. 3. Therefore St. Paul assures us,
 that those who are unconverted, " their understandings
 " are darkened, being alienated from the life of God,
 " through the ignorance that is in them, because of
 the blindness of their heart," Eph. iv. 18. Those
 who have a vital faith in Christ, have put off,
 concerning the former conversation, " the old man
 " which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts,
 " and are renewed in the spirit of their mind ; and
 " have put on the new man, which, after God, is
 " created in righteousness and true holiness," ver. 22,
 23, 24.

True godliness is godlikeness ; real holiness is the
 conformity of our nature to the holy nature of God ;
 the conformity of our lives to the will of God, which
 was the grand embassy of the blessed Jesus's coming
 into the world, as very evidently appears by all his
 divine doctrines. Therefore every unprejudiced ratio-
 nal mind must acknowledge that there is such an intrin-
 sic value in them, which, if they were engraven on
 mens hearts, and practis'd in their lives, they would
 resemble God in all his imitable perfections. And
 from hence it is exceeding clear and apparent, that the
 blessed

bleſſed Jeſus ſought the honour and glory of God, and not his own : for “ he came down from heaven not to do his own will, but the will of him that ſent him ; therefore the ſame is true, John vi. 38. “ and no unrighteouſneſs is in him,” John vii. 18.

When he told the Jews that the doctrine he delivered was not his own, (he muſt be underſtood to ſpeak as a man ; for thoſe he was ſpeaking to looked on him no more than to be a mere man) his doctrine was not of his own inventing and deviſing, as a man : it was no contrivance merely of his own, becauſe he was commiſſioned by God, whoſe ambaffador and great prophet he was. Therefore he preſcribed to mankind an infallible rule, whereby they might be certainly aſſured whether the doctrine he preached was from God or not ; which was, that if any perſon endeavoured to do the will of God in the beſt manner they were capable of, according to their knowledge, they ſhould be convinced of the doctrine, and its truth. The bleſſed Jeſus’s ſeeking the glory of God, and not his own, deſiring no applauſe of mankind, is an undoubted evidence and proof to every unprejudiced mind, that his doctrine was from heaven. He therefore muſt be true, and “ no unrighteouſneſs in him,” John vii. 18. Therefore be not faithleſs but believing.

Let me earneſtly beſeech you, with an honeſt upright mind, ſeriouſly to reflect on the whole tenor and deſign of his life and doctrines, and you will find them one continued ſeries of holineſs and goodneſs : travelling up and down the world, not in a pompous ſtation of life, but on the contrary, in a humble low condition,

very despicable in the sight of the greatest part of mankind: always doing good, either to the bodies or souls of men, without respect of persons, rich and poor, good and bad, of any profession or religion, without distinction.

If you will strictly examine the moral or meaning of every parable and saying he uttered, you will find some one thing or other in each greatly conducing to instil holiness and goodness into all whom he ever spoke to, readily and chearfully embracing every opportunity thereunto; even turning their wicked thoughts, their ill designed speeches, for their edification and improvement, their profit and advantage.

Witness, when some of them interrupted him in his preaching, by telling him that his mother and brethren wanted to speak to him, he answered and said unto them, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" and he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother, and my brethren: for whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother," Matth. xii. 47 to 50. which most graciously discovers to us, how exceeding dear to him obedient christians are; and that he prefers his spiritual kindred before his natural.

Alliance by faith is much more valued by him than alliance by blood; consequently spiritual regeneration bringeth mankind into a more honourable relation to Christ, than natural generation.

Witness

Witness also, when his disciples had been disputing one with another, who of them should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, instead of upbraiding them for their needless ambitious enquiries about precedence and preheminance, which of them should come to the highest dignity and honour, he makes use of this occasion to inculcate the necessity of humility on them, and becoming children, and as free from ambition as those who affected nothing of precedence or superiority.

From whence we may learn, that those who are dignified with church preferments, who have the greatest titles of honour and profit, ought to be adorned with the lowest degree of humility, and be sensible they are laid under the greatest obligations to be the most eminently useful and serviceable in the promoting and encouraging of real vital religion.

The blessed Jesus assures his disciples, that “ whoso-
 “ ever should receive a child in his name, receiveth
 “ him ; and whosoever should receive him, receiveth
 “ him that sent him ; for he that was least among them,
 “ the same shall be great,” Luke ix. 48. That is, those
 who have the most humbling thoughts of themselves,
 and who discover it by their actions, in doing the most
 mortifying self-denying deeds of kindness and goodness,
 in the smallest degree, to any of their fellow creatures,
 in the name and for the sake of the blessed Jesus, shall
 be valued by him and his father, as if it was done to
 them, Mark ix. 37. Luke ix. 48.

When a woman, out of a great zeal, lifted up her voice and said unto him, " Blessed is the womb that " bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked," Luke xi. 27 ; he most graciously instructed her and the audience in the great privileges and blessings of those who were favoured with divine revelation, which were much superior to any other external advantages whatever ; " Yea rather, (says our Lord) blessed are " they that hear the word of God, and keep it," ver. 28. that is, much more blessed are those that bare him in their hearts by faith, who live his commandments.

The blessedness of an obedient believer is superior to any advantages whatsoever.

When Martha interrupted him with a frivolous complaint with respect to her sister, about the trifling concerns of this life, he very cordially reproved her for her over solicitude about worldly affairs, which were of little or no consequence, reminding her of the absolute necessity of caring for her precious and immortal soul, " the one thing needful," which her sister had secured invincible, impregnable ; " Martha, Martha, thou art " careful and troubled about many things, but one " thing is needful, and Mary hath chose that good " part which shall not be taken from her," Luke x. 41, 42.

This teaches mankind that they should be neither afraid or ashamed of the displeasure of any of their friends or acquaintance, to reprove their failings in the spirit

spirit of meekness, for their spiritual benefit and advantage.

No doubt Martha was an honest, well meaning, friendly woman, yea, a pious good woman, beloved of the blessed Jesus, notwithstanding she is reproved by him.

He does not find fault with her for her good nature and generosity, but for her over anxiousness and carking care, her perplexity: that her affections were too much set on earthly enjoyments, infinitely inferior to her spiritual interest, to the neglect of the one thing needful, her soul.

When the superstitious pharisees made a great wonder at our Lord's not washing before dinner, he took an occasion to reprimand them for their most abominable hypocritical outside righteousness, to their shameful neglect of moral rectitude and substantial goodness, which was of absolute necessity; who told them, " They made
" clean the outside of the cup and the platters, but
" their inward part was full of ravening and wicked-
" nefs: they tythe mint and rue, and all manner of
" herbs: the lesser things, neglecting the essentials;
" passing over judgment and the love of God. These
" ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other
" undone," Matth. xxiii. 23.

Again, when one of his audience desired him to speak to his brother, to divide his temporal estate with him, he took the opportunity to discourse against the prevailing
sin

sin of covetousness, dissuading him from setting his heart on earthly riches, assuring him, the happiness of man's life consisted not in the abundance which he possessed, but in the rational enjoyment of them, subservient to spiritual purposes; they being of a very uncertain continuance, at the best of a perishing nature: therefore he takes occasion to discover to him the ill consequence of placing any expectations of enjoyment and happiness in them. The loss of one single breath frustrating all future expectations from them; therefore he counsels mankind principally to regard their grand interest, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you," Matt. vi. 33.

But the common way of the world is to be anxious and seek for the things of an earthly duration. They would be very easy and contented to seek worldly enjoyment, and to have heaven without seeking. But the religion of the blessed Jesus gives mankind not the least expectation of it, on those conditions, but discountenances it. He instructs them to ask, seek, and strive with the greatest assiduity, assuring them success, Matt. vii. 7, 8.

And if mankind would be but in as good earnest to get and secure heavenly riches, as they are temporary, by making religion and the salvation of their souls their first and chief care, they would be absolutely certain of receiving "riches and honour; durable riches and righteousness," Prov. viii. 18. "A crown of glory, that fadeth not away," 1 Peter v. 4. And in this world every necessary enjoyment would be added, as
much

much as the wisdom of God (who only knows) in what degree they are fit and convenient for them, Luke xii. 31.

When some who were in company with him had made some remarks on the dreadful and terrible calamity that befel the Galileans, he takes occasion to precaution them against rash judgment, and to interest them in the absolute necessity and importance of repentance, warning them of the horrible consequence which would attend the neglect of it, Luke xiii. 1, 2, 3.

When the blessed Jesus honoured one of the pharisees to dine with him on the Sabbath, they who were his chief enemies, contrary to the rules of upright behaviour and conversation, and real goodness, narrowly watched him, in order to make the entertainment become a snare, hoping that he might do, or say, something whereby they might accuse him. The blessed Jesus knew their ill design : however, it had not any influence on him, to prevent his good intentions to oppose their superstitious sentiments of religion, for whenever he had an opportunity of undeceiving mankind, he had no regard to the disapprobation of superstitious bigots, either with respect to time or place : therefore, agreeable to his wonted goodness and tender compassion, he took pity on one of their company, who laboured under a dropical disorder. After speaking to the lawyers and pharisees, relating to the legality of performing cures on the Sabbath day, (who became suddenly speechless) he worked a miracle, and immediately healed him, neglecting no opportunity of doing
good,

good, however disagreeable to hypocrites; expostulating with them on the reasonableness of it, proposing questions to them of a similar nature, parabolical representations, whose arguments were so exceeding clear and convincing, that they had nothing to reply, but continued fullen and silent, which learns mankind that it must be well pleasing to God, to do real acts of kindness, benevolence, and all possible good on the Sabbath, as well as on all other days.

The blessed Jesus observing the generality of their company (at this entertainment of the pharisees) to be tinctured with pride by affecting precedency, he meekly instructed them in the amiable virtue of humility, making it very evidently appear that the consequence of it would redound to themselves, and be its own reward; and that emulation and pride would be their own downfall, Luke xiv. 1 to 12.

The excellent method which the blessed Jesus prescribes in order for mankind to attain real honour, both from God and man, is to have low, humble, self-diffident thoughts of themselves; to be sensible that all their understandings and knowledge; all their superior abilities, are but what they have received, for which reason St. Paul directs christians "in lowliness of mind, each to esteem others better than themselves," Philip. ii. 3. The wisest of all mankind has asserted, "A man's pride shall bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit," Prov. xxix. 23. and the blessed Jesus told the pharisees, "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be
" be

“ be exalted,” Luke xiv. 11. He also directed the chief pharisees, that when they made an entertainment for their fellow creatures, in what manner to do it, so as it would be well-pleasing to God, which was to invite poor hearts that scarcely knew what it was to fare sumptuously all their life-time, viz. the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, who were real objects of sympathy and compassion ; which would be real goodness and godlikeness, because the blessed Jesus justly observes, it is not in their power to recompence again. Confining of feasts to friends, brethren, kinsmen and rich neighbours, has no intrinsic goodness in it, for they are sensible they will invite again, and to return the obligation and seeming friendship. But as to the other poor souls, in their distressed circumstances, it is out of their power to do it in this world : but their blessing will accompany their benefactors ; for almighty God, their heavenly Father, who created all his good creatures for the use and benefit of mankind, will, at the grand and awful day of retribution, abundantly reward them for it, Luke xiv. 12 to 15.

Natural religion is very deficient in these refined moral doctrines, therefore we are infinitely obliged to the blessed Jesus for them. For if all mankind, unbelievers and speculative believers, would become real christians, both high and low, rich and poor, kings on the throne to cobblers in the stall, each one acting according to their different stations and situations in life, as prescribed in the gospel ; this world would become (comparatively speaking) a paradise, instead of a cage of unclean birds, as 'tis now. Peace and
plenty

plenty, unity and concord, friendship and good neighbourhood, and universal happiness would reign on the whole earth, in a degree as it does in heaven.

Then the potentates of the earth would cause “ their swords to be turned into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks.” Nation would not then lift up sword against nation, neither have occasion to learn war any more ; agreeable to the court prophet’s prediction, Isa. ii. 4. “ Every man then would sit under his vine, and under his fig-tree, none making of him afraid,” Mich. iv. 4. Then “ judgment would run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream,” Amos v. 24. Then “ there would be no more hurling or destroying in all God’s holy mountain : for the earth would be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,” Isa. xi. 9. Then “ the earth would yield her increase ; and God, even our own God, would bless us,” Ps. lxxvii. 6.

If all mankind would imitate the behaviour of the blessed Jesus, they would be blessings to each other, which was the original design of their great and good Creator, Preserver and Redeemer.

O how sweet and engaging, lovely and inviting was the temper, disposition and behaviour of our blessed Lord when on earth ! enough to soften and charm the most obdurate rugged heart.

He was one of easy access, of the greatest freedom and affability ; of a most delightful excellent disposition, quite opposite to moroseness, churlishness, and ill nature,
always

always unaffectedly grave and serious; calm and sedate, sociable and conversible, benevolent and compassionate, merciful and good, to the highest degree of perfection.

Those persons who were frowned on by his disciples, and looked upon as troublesome and rude by them, were not so by him; but were most kindly listened to, and very affectionately received. Little children, as unwelcome as they were to them, were very tenderly embraced, and even blessed by him, Mark x. 13 to 17.

He was quite the opposite to a proud, haughty, disdainful spirit; for when he was either invited to the houses of the poor or the rich, the good or the bad, he very readily accepted their invitations; neither did he esteem it as unbecoming his gravity and seriousness, to make one at a marriage entertainment; but was so exceeding good-natured and obliging as to perform a miracle, by converting water into wine for them after their own was exhausted, and had well drunken, by way of a chearful glass, John ii. 1 to 11. From whence every ingenuous mind may learn, that the religion of the blessed Jesus is neither severe nor austere: that it does not deny mankind to enjoy the bountiful productions of the earth, the good creatures of God, with delight and pleasure, to gratify their senses, so as they keep within bounds of moderation.

Therefore it is impossible that a rational mind should figure out a more complete religion, to make
man-

mankind comfortable in this world, and happy in the other, than Christ's; the sublime religion of the blessed Jesus.

All the creatures of God are to be enjoyed by mankind, and nothing to be refused, if received with thankful, grateful hearts, "they being sanctified by the word of God and prayer, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. All Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace; she is a tree of life to those that lay hold of her, and happy is every one that retaineth her," Prov. iii. 17, 18. which can only be learnt but by divine revelation.

When James and John, two of the blessed Jesus's disciples, with great rage desired him to call for fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans for their brutish behaviour in refusing him entertainment, with what mildness and gentleness did he rebuke them for their revengful disposition, saying thus, "Ye know not what manner of spirits ye are of, for the Son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them," Luke ix. 55, 56.

The candour and disposition of the blessed Jesus towards Peter, James and John, when they discovered by their behaviour such great unconcernedness and indifference to him, when he was approaching the very blackest and most horrible of all hours (his crucifixion); and when he desired them only to watch with him for a little space of time, (while he retired to pray) yet could not prevail with them from sleeping, though entreated by repeated solicitations.

Never-

Nevertheless, (so exceeding humane was he, as not to entertain any ill opinion of them) he only said to them, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" apologising for them, attributing it to their infirmity, and not to their wills; saying, "their spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak," Matth. xxvi. 40, 41. and notwithstanding his threefold command to them to watch with him, they disobeyed and fell asleep, which, to every considerate mind, must appear very aggravating, under such terrible circumstances as the blessed Jesus was then in. However, he did not in the least reflect on them, but told them to sleep on, and take their rest, for his hour was at hand; that the Son of man would be betrayed into the hands of sinners, Matth. xxvi. 45.

This admirable lenity and behaviour of the blessed Jesus's to his disciples instructs mankind always to put the very best constructions upon those actions of their fellow-creatures, which are capable of other interpretations; yea, even if by outward appearance their conduct and behaviour almost evidence the truth of it.

When that despicable monster, that villainous traitor Judas, (his hypocritical disciple) had the unparalleled audaciousness to accost him at the head of an armed multitude of miscreant ruffians, one might have thought that that was aggravation sufficient to have provoked Deity: but with what amazing mildness did he receive that ungrateful, diabolical missionary, who only said to him, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Luke xxii. 48. And when

his disciple Peter was so exasperated as to draw his sword, and cut off one of the ruffian's ears, who came to take him by force, he rebuked Peter, and commanded him to sheath his sword; and was so humane, compassionate and good, as to perform a miracle to restore the ruffian's ear, Luke xxii. 51.

With what inhuman villainous mockings, buffetings, spittings, did his blood-thirsty enemies afflict and torment him, by arraying him with a mock robe, a thorny crown, a reed scepter, and gave him to drink one of the most nauseous of all draughts, gall dissolved in vinegar, Matth. xxvii. 34. and soon after murdered him between two thieves, nailing his precious hands and feet to the cross, lancing his dear side with a spear, spilling his invaluable blood; yet in the midst of all this hellish popish cruelties, he supplicated pardon for them, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34. Be astonished, O heavens! and tremble, O earth! when thou dost reflect on the barbarity and cruelty that was executed on the only begotten Son of God at his crucifixion; who never was, or ever could be (with truth) charged with sin or folly, dissimulation or hypocrisy, 1 Peter ii. 22.

What adorable patience and long-suffering did he discover even to the vilest of mankind; what incomparable goodness has he manifested to the children of men! At his crucifixion he sealed the truth of his doctrines with his most precious invaluable blood, and blessed those that cursed him, doing good to them that hated him, and with his last breath prayed for those who murdered him. Therefore, to the last moment of his life, he practised, in the most complete manner, what he preached

preached to others, Matt. v. 44. " leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps," 1 Peter ii. 21.

His resurrection from the dead undoubtedly proved him to be the Son of God with power; therefore we find the apostles frequently attesting the truth of it; they themselves being eye-witnesses of it. " This Jesus (saith Peter) hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses," Acts ii. 32. He plainly and publicly told the Jews they preferred a murderer to him, and killed the " Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof they were witnesses," Acts iii. 14, 15. And when Peter and John were commanded by the grand council at Jerusalem not to speak at all, or teach in the name of Jesus, they did not hesitate a moment, but as christian heroes courteously answered them, saying, " Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," Acts iv. 19, 20. And when they reasoned with the high priest and others, (the grand sanhedrim) persisting in their duty, obeying God rather than man, declared unto them, " The God of their fathers raised up Jesus, whom they slew, and hanged on a tree; whom God had exalted to be a prince and Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins; and that they were witnesses of these things, as also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him," Acts v. 30, 31, 32. In which declaration is contained a two-fold evidence, which manifested the truth of what they spake to every unprejudiced mind; for they delivered nothing but what they themselves were eye and ear-witnesses to, and withal

attested it to be true by the power of the Holy Ghost in the miracles which were wrought by Christ and his apostles. Their preaching was rational and convincing to every unprejudiced mind ; and the method they made use of tended to persuade mankind of the truth of their gospel, referring them to their understandings and conscience. “ Yea, and why even of yourselves “ judge ye not what is right ?” Luke xii. 57.

Part of the conference which St. Peter had with Cornelius the centurion was, “ That God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power ; “ who went about doing good, and healing all that “ were oppressed of the devil ; for God was with “ him, and we are witnesses of all things which “ he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in “ Jerusalem : whom they slew and hanged on a tree, “ him God raised up the third day, and shewed him “ openly ; not to all the people, but unto witnesses “ chosen before of God, even us, who did eat and “ drink with him, after he rose from the dead ; and “ he commanded us to preach unto the people, that it “ is he which was ordained of God to be the judge “ of the quick and the dead ; to whom gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth shall receive remission of sins,” Acts x. 38 to 44.

These are rational and demonstrable evidences of the truth of the facts relating to the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of the blessed Jesus, attested by those who were both eye and ear witnesses ; and who were the best able to make known the truth of them to a wicked, censorious, unbelieving world. For where
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the truth of a doctrine depends upon a matter of fact, the truth of that doctrine is sufficiently manifested, if the matter of fact be evidently proved in the most rational and clearest manner it is capable of.

Thus it is in reference to the doctrine of Christ ; the truth of it being interwoven with the truth of the whole history of our Lord ; therefore if the facts relating to him be true, his doctrine must necessarily be divine ; consequently infallible, for if it be unexceptionably true (as it really is) that there was such a person as Jesus, born at Bethlehem, who did so many miracles, and at last suffered the death of the cross, and after he had lain almost three days in the grave, rose again from the dead, and appeared to many incontestible witnesses, such as had no worldly views to answer by their attestation of it, but on the contrary suffered reproach and disgrace, hatred, envy, and malice, scourges and imprisonment, persecution, and even death itself ; what shadow of reason can there possibly be to call in question the testimony of this divine person Jesus of Nazareth ? Certainly there can be no reason ; for there were the greatest evidences which possibly could be to these matters of fact ; for these disinterested men were both eye and ear witnesses of it. These facts were of such a nature, that their senses could not possibly be deceived, for Christ was made of flesh and blood as well as themselves ; therefore they had as convincing evidences that they saw him, and conversed with him, and felt his flesh, as any man in the world can be sensible they conversed, saw, and felt one of their own species, their fellow mortals, who is likewise made of flesh and blood. Christ appeared openly to the world, and his miracles were not performed in secret, they were

real and visible miracles; the truth of which he challenged even his enemies to gainsay. For “when the high priest of the Jews asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine, Jesus answered him very plainly, viz. that he spake openly to the world; that he ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted, and in secret that he said nothing,” John xviii. 19, 20.

The man who was born blind, and cured by our Saviour was known by rich and poor throughout the country to have been born blind, as attested by his parents; and as his blindness from his birth was publicly known, so also was his cure; which was declared by the man himself, on whom this grand miracle was wrought. and by his parents also; also to the hypocritical unbelieving pharisees, John ix. 9 to 35.

When the blessed Jesus raised a dead corps, (the widow's son of Nain) it was done before numbers of persons. Many who saw the miracle, or at least some (in all probability) were present at his death, Luke vii. to xviii. Lazarus, who was well known to be dead four days, his resurrection could not possibly be a deception, because when our Lord ordered his grave-stone to be taken away, Lazarus immediately arose and came forth, in the presence of them all.

The death, passion and resurrection of the blessed Jesus himself was an evidence of sense, done in the presence of his greatest adversaries. The soldiers themselves were sufficient witnesses of his being really dead, when they came to break his bones, before he was taken down from the cross, who did not do it, by reason they found him

him already dead, which they acknowledged. At his resurrection the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, and no body found therein, although the sepulchre was constantly guarded by soldiers, who shook, and became as dead men, at the earthquake, when the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of Christ's sepulchre, Matth. xxviii. 2, 3, 4. And his very disciples were also terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had seen a spirit, Luke xxiv. 37. therefore dispersed themselves up and down in several places, till the blessed Jesus convinced them of the truth of his resurrection. But after all, Thomas was not satisfied unless he put his hands in the holes of the blessed Jesus's sides, and saw in his hands the print of his nails; all which he did, and then acknowledged him to be his Lord and his God, John xx. 28.

The blessed Jesus condescending to satisfy the incredulity of Thomas, and others of his disciples, hath made it most evident, that the body which he arose from the grave in, was that very identical body which was crucified and laid in the sepulchre,

The more suspicious and incredulous the apostles themselves were at first, the greater evidence is it, how far they were from any the least design of imposing upon the world by the doctrines they preached.

When many witnesses concur so strong in the same testimony, nothing can disparage more the truth of a testimony, than the counter-witnesses of such who were present at the same time. But when all the witnesses

fully agree, not only in the substance, but in all material circumstances relating to it. This must appear to be a true and valid testimony to every thinking unprejudiced mind.

Now there is no real dissention in any of the witnesses who wrote the birth, life, miracles, death, resurrection and ascension of the blessed Jesus. All of them attesting the very same things, though they wrote at different times, different places, and on different occasions. Yet there is no real difference in any one material or essential circumstance of the whole history: not only his apostles, but numbers of people besides, yea, many of his enemies, were witnesses to most of the blessed Jesus's miracles.

As for his resurrection, it would be very strange and unaccountable indeed, that five hundred persons should all agree in the same thing, if it was not true: therefore there is no reason to suspect such testimonies which are given by eye and ear witnesses, without questioning their knowledge of the things they relate, or their fidelity in relating them.

Now there is not the least ground to doubt of either of these, in reference to those persons who gave testimony to the world concerning the person and actions of the blessed Jesus, for they were such as were intimately conversant both with his person, life and behaviour, and whom he had chose and trained up for that very end, that they might be sufficiently qualified to acquaint the world with the truth of things concerning himself, after his resurrection from the dead: and accordingly

cordingly they followed him up and down the world wherever he went : they were also with him in his solitude and retirements, and thereby had an opportunity of seeing all his actions, and to observe the unspotted innocency of his life.

Some of them were with him in his transfiguration, others in his agony and bloody sweat, and they heard the expressions which came from his mouth ; in all which he discovered a most wonderful submission to the will of God, and a great readiness of mind to suffer for the good of mankind : the means they had of knowing the truth relating to the blessed Jesus cannot therefore be reasonably questioned, neither their fidelity in reporting what they knew.

The truth of the doctrines they preached wrought so far upon themselves, that they parted with all their worldly comfort and subsistence for the sake of it. Although their worldly substance were not great, yet they left their all, what was near and dear to them, their houses, their wives and children, for Christ, and that not in order to gain any higher preferment in this world, but quitted an easy and quiet life, for one most troublesome and dangerous : and it is to be admired with what readiness and cheerfulness they all underwent disgraces and persecutions, nay, the most cruel and shocking deaths, for the truth of the gospel. Therefore it cannot be reasonably supposed, that ever men should be so prodigal of their ease and lives, as to throw both of them away, for testifying such things, which themselves were not fully assured of the truth of.

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Would it not be the highest folly imaginable, to have deceived themselves in an affair of so great moment to them as the truth of that doctrine which they preached? especially as all their hopes and happiness depended on it, even to all eternity; "who declared themselves to be the most miserable of all persons, if their hopes was to be confined only to this present life," 1 Cor. xv. 19.

Can we now think that any, who had the common reason of men, would part with all the contentments of this world, and expose themselves to continual hazards, and at last readily undergo death itself, for the sake of something which was but the fiction of their own brains? What should cause them to be so sedulous and industrious in preaching such things, that they could say, necessity was laid upon them, "yea, woe was to them if they preached not the gospel," 1 Cor. ix. 16. and also when they saw and experienced such difficulties and troubles in preaching of it, had there not been some more powerful attractive in the beauty and excellency of the doctrine they preached, than any could be in the ease and tranquillity of the world.

Thus we evidently see the fidelity of the apostles manifested in such a way and manner, as no other witnesses were ever yet willing to hazard their lives for.

And therefore Origen justly condemns Celsus (a heathen philosopher) of a very ridiculous impertinency, when

when he would have paralleled the relations of Herodotus and Pindarus, concerning Aristeus Proconnesius; with those of the apostles concerning Christ; for saith he, did either of these two venture their lives upon the truth of what they writ concerning him, as the apostles did to attest the truth of what they preached concerning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? L. 3. C. Celsus, p. 127.

The faithfulness of the apostles appears in their manner of reporting the things which they delivered, for there ever may be something gathered from the manner of expression, concerning the particular temper and disposition of the persons from whom it comes.

We may certainly read the greatest fidelity in the apostles, from the peculiar manner of their expressing themselves to the world, which they do with the greatest impartiality, not declaring only what was glorious and admirable to the world, but what they knew would be accounted foolishness by it.

They who had only sought to have been admired for the rare discoveries which they brought to the world, would be sure to conceal every thing which might be accounted ridiculous; but the apostles fixed themselves principally on what was most contemptible in the eyes of the world, and what they were most mocked and derided for; and that which they delighted most in the preaching of, was the cross of Christ.

St. Paul was so much in love with this most glorious topick, (which was a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks) that he valued the knowledge of nothing else in comparison of Christ, and him crucified: "God forbid (says he) that I should glory, saving the cross of Christ." Philip. iii. 8. Gal. vi. 14.

I sincerely ask you in the name of truth, what should be the reason that they should rejoyce in that most, which was most despicable to the world, amongst all ranks and orders of men, and for which they suffered so much, had not they seen far greater truth and excellency in it, of infinitely more value than the most sublime speculations concerning God and the souls of men, in the school of Plato, or any other heathen philosopher.

That all mankind should be obliged, in order to obtain salvation, to believe in one who was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, was a very strange doctrine to the unbelieving world, and is to this hour.

If the apostles had artfully suited their doctrines to the school of Plato, what fame might they have gained among the heathen philosophers? an universal fame they would have met with, and have had numbers of followers more than they had: and if they favoured the vices of mankind, we should at this day have few, if any, professing unbelievers.

If, in general terms, they had discovered of the benignity of the divine nature, and the manifestations of the goodness of God in the world, and represented that he was all merciful, and therefore all mankind must be necessarily happy in a future world. And in
order

order to qualify mankind to participate of the divine nature, the perfect idea of true goodness, and the express image of the person of God, the resplendency of his glory, had veiled himself in human nature, and had every where scattered such beams of light and goodness, as warmed and invigorated the frozen spirits of mankind with higher sentiments of God and themselves, and raised them up above the flatulency of this terrestrial matter to breathe in a purer air, and converse with more noble objects, and so by degrees to fit the souls of mankind for those more refined illapses of real goodness, which might always satisfy the soul's desires, and yet be always keeping them up, till the soul should be sunning itself to all eternity, under the immediate beams of light and love ; and that after this incarnate Deity had spread abroad the wings of his love for a while upon this lower world, till by his gentle heat and incubation he had quickened the more tractable part of mankind to some degree of a divine life ; he then withdrew himself back again into the superior world, and put off that vail by which he made himself known to those who are here confined to the prison of their bodies. I say, such doctrines as these would have better suited the taste of the generality of mankind.

Had the apostles regarded applause among the famous philosophers of the heathens, who were so very much admired in the age they lived in, and even now to this day among many unthinking, gay, flighty libertines, who prefer their maxims and writings to those of Christ and his apostles, or any other, relating to that grand and important affair ; the redemption of mankind,

kind, in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. How easy had it been for them to have made very considerable additions to the most lofty and sublime speculations they had attained to, especially if they had omitted so mean and contemptible a doctrine as the cursed cross, the sufferings and death of the Son of God? but this they were so far from, that the main thing which they preached to the world was the insufficiency and vanity of all human wisdom and learning, without the knowledge of Christ, and the necessity of all mankind's believing in, and relying on Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, in order to save mankind from the wrath to come.

The apostles indeed discovered very much, infinitely more than the most lofty Platonist could do, concerning the goodness and love of God to mankind; which was, that "he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. "And that herein was the love of God manifested, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 8. And that this was the greatest truth, "and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15. They never dreamt of any divine goodness, which should make mankind happy, without a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. No, no, it was their design to persuade mankind, that all the communications of God's goodness to the world, were wholly in and through him, alleging, that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved." Acts iv. 12. And it is impossible any rational mind
should

should judge otherwise, unless they imagine Plato was a greater favourite of heaven, and knew more of the mind and will of God than the blessed Jesus ; and that the Platonists had greater revelations from heaven than St. Paul.

Is it reasonable to believe the apostles would hazard their own reputation, and be accounted babblers, fools and madmen, for preaching the way of salvation to be only attainable in and through a person crucified between two thieves, had they not been convinced, not only of the truth, but importance of it, and that it concerned mankind as much to believe it, as it did to avoid eternal misery ?

Let me ask you a serious question, Did St. Paul preach ever the less the words of truth and soberness, because he was told to his face that his learning had made him mad ? who assured them, “ if he was so, it is to “ God,” 2 Cor. v. 13. And pray what great wonder was it, if the love of Christ in the apostles should make them so willing and chearful to lose their reputation among the unthinking and prejudiced, obstinate, wicked part of mankind, for that dear God-Man, “ who was the way, the truth and the life, and by “ whom alone they must find acceptance with God,” John xiv. 6. “ and count all things but loss, for “ the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their “ Lord ; for whom they suffered the loss of all things, “ and counted them but dung, that they might win “ Christ,” Philip iii. 8. “ That this mind might “ be in them, which was also in Christ Jesus, who be-
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“ ing in the form of God, thought it not robbery to
 “ be equal with God, but made himself of no reputa-
 “ tion, and took upon him the form of a servant, and
 “ was made in the likeness of man, and being found
 “ in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and be-
 “ came obedient unto death, even the death of the
 “ cross.” Philip. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8. Therefore the apostles were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, on any consideration whatsoever ; because they knew it was the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth, 1 Peter i. 5.

Neither in their preachings or their writings would they omit any of those passages relating to our Saviour’s death, though they were accounted the most dishonourable to his person ; which is certainly as great an evidence of their fidelity, as any unprejudiced reasonable mind can expect : and this made Origen to say, the disciples of Christ wrote all things with a great deal of candour and love of truth, not concealing from the world those passages of the life of Christ, which would be accounted most foolish and ridiculous.

Impostors and designing men cast a mist of many dark and cloudy words before their hearers, but when once they are detected and brought to open light, their vizards fall off, and their deformity appears. Such persons take delight in swerving quite out of the apprehension of those who follow them, and never think themselves better recompenced for their pains, than when they are most admired and least understood : but never was christianity more dishonoured, than when
 men

men turned it from its native simplicity and plainness, into a number of cloudy and insignificant expressions, which are so far from making men better understand the truth of it, that it was certainly the devil's hellish design (by such obscure terms) to make way for a mystery iniquity; and soon after we saw and found the effects of it in an oracle set up at Rome instead of Delphos, and all the pretence of it was the obscurity supposed in scripture. Therefore all who are and would be the disciples indeed of the blessed Jesus, would do well not to imagine there is infallibility in any private or public interpretation of holy writ explicable by mankind: "for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Peter i. 21. Pray, does darkness appear or disappear at the rising of the sun? Is the sun at last grown so beggarly, that he is fain to borrow light of the earth? Must the holy scriptures be beholden to the church for its clearness, and Christ himself not speak intelligible, unless his holiness the pope be his interpreter? Did Christ reveal to the world the way to salvation, and yet leave mankind to seek it in the mazes of darkness and obscurity? Which was it? was it till a guide residing at Rome was commissioned to direct them in the way to it? This St. Peter (his pretended predecessor) never gave the least hint of, or was it ever heard of in scripture.

What strange witnesses were the apostles, if they did not speak and write all the essential truths of the gospel with plainness, who assures mankind they did? 2 Cor. iii. ver. 12. And for that very end purposely laid aside

all the excellency of words of human wisdom, 1 Cor. ii. ver. 1. that mankind might not be to seek for their meaning in a matter of so great moment. That the gospel was hid to none but such as are lost, " whose eyes are blinded by the God of this world," 2 Cor. iv. ver. 3, 4. How had mankind been to seek, as to the truth of christianity, if the apostles had not declared the doctrine of the gospel with all evidence and perspicuity? Whom must unbelievers or christians believe in, in this case, which is an affair of an infinite importance, the apostles of Christ, or the pope at Rome? The doctrines revealed by the gospel are a light to mankind, directing them in their way to heaven, which is an infallible rule to walk by.

It is a strange quality of light to be obscure, and of a rule to be crooked.

It is not only evident, from the apostles own affirmations, that they laid aside all affected obscurity, and ambiguous expressions, and philosophical terms, whereby the world might have been to seek for what they were to believe, but it is likewise very evident and clear, from the very nature of the doctrine they preached, and the design of their preaching of it, that they made use of no such false arts.

Pray what occasion is there for Rhetoric in plain truths, or affected phrases in giving evidence? How incongruous would obscure expressions have been to the design of saving of souls, by the foolishness of preaching? if they had artfully spoken in their preaching above the capacities of those they spoke to, they certainly

tainly could never have converted a soul without a miracle.

For the common and ordinary way of conversion, is to convince the mind and judgment, and to illuminate the understanding: but what good effect can that preaching have, which is so much above either?

The polite modern preachers in our days, of all denominations, would do well to take this argument into their serious consideration, that their orations might be of greater edification to their hearers, than as if a barbarian chattered to them, 1 Cor. xiv. 11.

St. Paul tells us, "He that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation and comfort, 1 Cor. xiv. ver. 3. We preach not ourselves, (saith the same apostle) but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake," 2 Cor. iv. 5. If they had sought themselves, or their own credit and reputation, there might have been some reason that they should have used the like method of the sophists, among the Greeks: but they disowned and rejected all these poor artifices of mean low-spirited men, "Their speech and preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power, that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God," 1 Cor. ii. ver. 4, 5. They declared the testimony of God with spiritual evidence: they renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, "nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending themselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of

"God," 2 Cor. iv. 10. What could be more suitable to such a design, than that great plainness and faithfulness with which they spake? We find in the testimonies of the apostles, (as Origen justly observes) nothing that is spurious or counterfeit, nothing favouring of the cunning craftiness of such as lie in wait to deceive.

It is impossible (saith he) to think that men, never bred up in the sophistry of the Greeks, nor experienced in the rhetorical insinuations used among them, could ever be able so suddenly to persuade the world to embrace that which had been a fiction of their own brains.

The truth is, the apostles speak like men very confident of the truth of what they speak, and not like such, who were fain to fetch in the help of all their skill, to find out some probable arguments, to make mankind believe that, which, it is probable, they did not believe themselves, which was frequently the case of the great orators among the heathens.

We find no pedantic flourishes, no flattering insinuations, no affected cadencies, no such great care of the rising and falling of the words, in the several sentences which make up so great part of that which was accounted eloquence in the apostles times: no, every thing they said was grave and serious; every word had its due weight, every sentence brim full of spiritual eloquence. Their whole discourse was most becoming the majesty and authority of the holy Spirit of God,
which

which they spake by. And herein was discovered a great part of the infinite wisdom of God, in the choice he made of the persons who were to propagate the doctrine of Christ in the world: that they were not such, who, by their great repute and fame in the world, might easily draw whole multitudes to embrace their dictates; but (that there might not be the least foundation for an implicit faith) they were of so mean a rank and condition in the world, that in all probability their names had never been heard of, had not their doctrine made them famous. To this purpose Origen excellently speaks: I am of opinion, (says he) that Jesus did purposely make use of such preachers of his doctrine, that there might be no room for suspicion, that they came instructed in the arts of sophistry, but that it be clearly manifest to those who might consider of it, that there was no design in those who discovered so much simplicity in their writings, and that they had a more divine power, which was more efficacious than the greatest volubility of expression, or ornaments of speech, or the artifices which were used in the Grecian compositions. Vid. C. Celsum, l. 3. You may be sure the apostles delivered their doctrines with the greatest openness and freedom of speech; they did not give out one thing to the world, and another to their private disciples: but with great freedom and boldness declared their doctrine in the most public places, and before their greatest enemies. They knew they were looked on as deceivers by the world, but yet they knew themselves to be true, 2 Cor. vi. 8.

This is the usual requital good men have from the world, that they are looked on as the greatest deceivers of it. If it be so with others, we have much less cause to wonder at it, when he, who by the prophet is stiled "the desire of all nations," Haggai ii. 7. and who is by another prophet foretold, "as despised and rejected of men," Isa. liii. ver. 3. was, when in this world, call'd "a deceiver," Matt. xxvii. 63. No wonder then if his disciples were accounted such, although they manifested their veracity by their open carriage and free speaking to the faces of their greatest adversaries.

The apostles neither feared the Jews skill in their law, nor the wisdom and subtilty of the Greeks. St. Paul preached Christ openly among the Jews, in their synagogues: and he encountered the epicureans and stoics among the Athenians, Acts xvii. 18. and preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. If the apostles had any thing of deceit in them, as to things they related concerning Christ, they would not certainly have spoken with so much confidence in him, in the presence of those who had been his murderers; but we find they appealed to themselves; as also to the miracles which he wrought among them; and for the truth of his resurrection, they were ready to lay down their lives.

That his body was gone, was evident: that his disciples should take it was impossible, as they had such a strong guard of soldiers watching it, who would have

have been glad to have discovered any attempt of it. But on the contrary, all his disciples were exceeding fearful and timorous, infomuch that they fled upon Christ's being apprehended. Now what could it be to make such fearful persons afterwards so courageous and resolute as they were, had there not been something more than ordinary to convince and encourage them? The apostles delivered their testimonies with the greatest particularity, as to all circumstances: they do not change or alter any of them upon different examinations before several persons; they all agree in the greatest constancy to themselves, and uniformity with each other.

As to matters of indifferency, we find the apostles very yielding and condescending, but as to any thing which concerned their testimony, they were most constant and stedfast.

Had the gospel been some cunningly contrived fancy, it had been impossible but so many different persons, in such different places, and under such different conditions, would have varied as to some very material circumstance of it; or else they would have been so wise as to have delivered it in general terms, without insisting much on such particular circumstances, which if they had been false, might have been very easily disproved: but with what particular enumeration of circumstances do the apostles preach Christ to the world? Peter tells the Jews, "it was Jesus of Nazareth whom he preached," "a man approved of God among you, by miracles," "and wonders, and signs, which God did by him, in

" the midst of you ; as ye yourselves also know him,
 " being delivered by the determinate council and fore-
 " knowledge of God : ye have taken, and by wicked
 " hands have crucified and slain whom God hath raised
 " up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was
 " not possible that he should be holden of it," Acts ii.
 22, 23, 24. And lest they should think it was not the
 same person who rose again, with great boldness and
 freedom of spirit he saith to them, " Therefore let all
 " the house of Israel know assuredly, that God had
 " made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both
 " Lord and Christ," ver. 36. Yea, that same indivi-
 dual person, " him hath God exalted with his right
 " hand to be a Prince and Saviour, for to give repen-
 " tance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," Acts v. 31.

Now if there had been any ground of suspicion, as
 to the truth of these facts, who had been so able to
 disprove them, or so willing and ready to do it, as
 those persons who had crucified him ? For we cannot
 but conceive that those who had a hand in his death,
 would have endeavoured by all possible means to dis-
 prove his resurrection from the dead. For what a case
 were they likely to be in, if these things which the
 apostles constantly preached were true ?

If Christ had all the power in his hands, and there
 was no salvation in any other name but only in his,
 whom they crucified, they were like to be in a most
 deplorable condition. Therefore if any set of men
 can be supposed to be inquisitive after the truth of
 these circumstances, no doubt but they were ; and if
 they

they could have found the least flaw in their testimony, the world had soon been alarmed of it. The Jews, who were then so much dispersed all over the nation, would have divulged it in all parts. The apostles would have been told of it, as they preached Christ in the public synagogues.

And can we in any reason think, but these Jews who persecuted St. Paul, as he preached in the synagogues at Asia, and afterwards impeached him so openly at Jerusalem, would have enquired into all the circumstances concerning Christ: and all the other Jews would have wrote to their friends at Jerusalem to be fully informed of those strange things, which were told them openly in all places in their synagogues, by men of their own nation and language, concerning one Jesus who was crucified, and rose again from the dead, had there been so much as any the least plausible pretext, that any of these circumstances were not true? Is it not most reasonable to believe, that such an obstinate people, who were full of resentment and malice, who were so vastly bigotted to their own ways and traditions, had propagated any thing that might have tended to the disparagement of Christ and his disciples? But we find malice itself could not find any flaw in the apostles testimony; for if they had, we should have assuredly heard of it from the Jews, or some other great opposers of christianity among the heathens, who pretended to be curious and inquisitive persons, such as Celsus, Julian, Hierocles and Porphyry.

In the name of truth, what reason can any one have to suspect such a testimony, which passed uncontroled at
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that time, when it was alone capable of being disproved, and when men's interest and design would have put them so much upon it?

No testimony ought to be taken against a matter of fact thus attested, but from such persons who had equal or greater knowledge of the things attested, and manifest greater fidelity in reporting them. It is easy to make it appear that, supposing any persons at that time had contradicted the testimony of the apostles concerning our Saviour, yet there had been no reason in the world to have hearkened to their testimony, in opposition to that of the apostles; and that on these accounts the apostles witnessed the affirmative, which is more capable of being attested than any negative can be. The apostles were conversant with Christ much more than any other persons were, by reason they were chosen for that very end by Christ, to be constantly with him.

Could any therefore be as capable of knowing the truth of all particulars concerning Christ then as they were? Had there been any ground of suspicion concerning the design of Christ, in the name of truth, why could not the Jews have prevailed with Judas to discover it, as well as to betray his person? Judas had done but a good work, if Christ had been such an impostor as the Jews maliciously and blasphemously said he was.

What made Judas so little satisfied with what he had done? he grew weary of his life upon it, shockingly destroying himself on the reflexion of his horrid crime.

crime. Certainly no person had been so fit to have been produced as a witness against the blessed Jesus, as Judas, who had been so long attending him both in public and private, and had heard his sayings, and saw his miracles, but had not patience enough to stay, after that abominable and most detestable crime, to be a witness against him. But Providence ordered it so that he was the greatest witness at that time for him ; for he confessed to the chief priests and elders that he had sinned, by betraying innocent blood. They said to him, " What is that to us ? see thou to that," Matth. xxvii. 4. which answer of theirs amounts to an acknowledgment of the truth of his confession. What possible evidence could have been given more in behalf of our Saviour than Judas, and the chief priests and elders themselves ?

When a person so covetous as to betray his master for thirty pieces of silver, was so sick of his bargain, that he goes and returns the money to the chief priests and elders who had bribed him, declaring publicly, that the person was innocent whom he had betrayed ; who also confirmed it by being immediately himself conscious of his atrocious guilt ; and instead of the chief priests and elders telling him that he had done a good deed in betraying his master, (when he confessed to them he was innocent, could not gainsay it, or disprove it) otherwise would have readily done it for their own justification. Consider that vile miscreant Judas was one intimately acquainted with the blessed Jesus, and much better than any of the witnesses whom afterwards they suborned against him ; who yet contradicted

ed each other, and at last could produce nothing in the judgment of Pilate, the heathen governor, to believe Christ worthy of death ; “ Who took water, and washed
 “ his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person ; see ye to it,”
 Matth. xxvii. 24. The apostles were more free from design than any counter witness could be, because they could not possibly have any other motive to affirm what they did, but full conviction of the truth of what they spoke. Therefore if any of the Jews at that time had asserted any thing contrary to the apostles, it would have been on account of preserving their honour and reputation with the people, and for supporting their traditions ; and on the account to defend themselves in their enmity against the blessed Jesus, though they had not the least foundation or reason for it.

Who would believe the testimony of the scribes and pharisees, who had so great authority among the people, which they were like to lose, if Christ’s doctrine was true, before that of the apostles, who parted with their all for the sake of him, and ventured themselves wholly on the truth of his doctrine ?

None ever did so much to attest the negative as the apostles did, to prove their fidelity to the affirmative. Had a sufficient witness been timely produced, it cannot be reasonably thought that the apostles would have run so many considerable hazards in preaching the things which related to the person and actions of Christ. Did ever any lay down their lives to undeceive the world ? If the apostles were guilty of abusing it, the
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number of such persons had been inconsiderable, in comparison of those who were so fully perswaded of the truth of those things which concern our Saviour : who were all of them ready (as most of them did) to attest the truth of it with their lives. Whence should so many persons suddenly grow so confident of the truth of such things which were contrary to their former persuasions, education and interest, had they not been delivered in such a way, that they were assured of the undoubted truth of them? matters of fact being first believed, on account of the eye and ear witnesses, and received with an universal and uncontrouled assent by all such persons who have thought themselves concerned in knowing the truth of them, is a sufficient foundation for a firm assent to be built upon. Such persons therefore who thus became believers, had both liberty and opportunity to be fully convinced of the truth of them before they believed them; consequently no reason or motive can be assigned on which they should be induced to believe these things, but the undoubted evidence of truth, which were along with them. It must be acknowledged that in Mahometism vast numbers of persons have for several centuries continued in the belief of that vile impostor Mahomet; but there is a very sufficient reason to be given for it; the arbitrary power of the sword kept them in awe, and strictly forbid all the followers of Mahomet to dispute their religion at all, or compare it with any other; consequently it is not to be wondered at to find so great part of the world is under the tyranny of the Turk. Neither is it at all to be wondered at that such a number of those professing

feſſing chriſtians ſhould believe a great number of erroneous doctrines, and live in the practice of abſurd ſuperſtitious, becauſe it is to be conſidered that the prevalency of education has a mighty and powerful effect on mankind, eſpecially on weak heads and obſtinate hearts.

And when we conſider what an awe an inquiſition muſt have upon timorous and irresolved perſons, yea upon ſtout hearts, (liberty being dear and precious to all mankind) it is not to be wondered at : but now when a great number of perſons who are ſober and inquiſitive, ſhall, contrary to the principles of their education, and without fear of any human power and force, (which they beforehand are ſenſible will perſecute and puniſh them) and after diligent enquiry made into the ground on which they believe, forſake all their former perſwaſions, and reſolvedly adhere to the truth of the doctrine propounded to them, though it coſt them their lives ; if this is not a ſufficient reaſon to think their doctrine true, we muſt believe mankind to be the moſt ſilly, miſerable, unhappy creatures in the world, that will, with ſo much reſolution, part with all the advantage of this life, for the ſake of one to come, if that be not undoubtedly certain, and the doctrine propoſing it infallibly true.

It is an obſervable circumſtance in the propagation of the chriſtian religion, that though God made choice at firſt of perſons generally of mean rank and condition in the world, to be preachers of the goſpel, “ Choofing the weak things of the world, “ as the apoſtle ſaid, to confound the things that
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“are mighty,” 1 Cor. i. 27. God thereby making “it clearly appear that “our faith doth not stand “in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God,” 1 Cor. ii. 5. yet soon after the gospel was preached abroad in the world, we find persons of great rank and reputation for great parts and abilities, engaged in the profession of the christian faith.

In the history of the acts of the apostles we read of Sergius, a proconsul of Dionysius the Areopagite, converted to the faith of Christ. And in the succeeding ages of the church, many persons of great eminency for their excellent learning and abilities, such as Justin martyr; one, who before he became a christian, was very conversant with all the sects of the philosophers, stoics, peripatetics, pythagoreans, and at last was a professed platonist, till he was converted from Plato to Christ, and then found that true which he speaks of, in his dialogue with Trypho: that after all his enquiries into philosophy (speaking of the doctrine of Christ) that he found christianity to be the only sure and profitable philosophy. And when Trypho derides him as a man of very easy faith, for leaving the doctrine of Plato for that of Christ, (for we find by him, the Jews then had a more favourable opinion of the Platonists than of the christians) Justin Martyr is so far from being moved with such reproaches, that he tells him, he would undertake to demonstrate to him, that the christians did not give credit to empty fables, or any assertions that were not to be proved, but to such a doctrine as was full of a divine spirit and power, and flourished with grace.

At

At Alexandria we meet with a succession of excellent persons, who not only embraced christianity themselves, but became defenders of the faith.

Eusebius informs us, that Pantoenus was an excellent stoick before he became a christian, who afterwards was very zealous for the cause of Christ: that, in imitation of the apostles, he went into India, in order to convert the inhabitants to christianity, and at his return was made rector of the school at Alexandria, which (as the same author informs us) was much frequented by such, who were well skilled in human, as well as divine learning.

The learning of Origen is sufficiently known, which was in such great reputation, in his own time, that not only christians but philosophers flocked to his lectures at Alexandria, as Eusebius informs us, where he read the mathematicks and other parts of philosophy, as well as the sacred scriptures. And the same author informs us, that the philosophers dedicated their books to him, and frequently chose him as arbitrator, relating to matters of dispute. And Porphyry himself, in his book against the christians, speaks with great respect and veneration of Origen, and makes a high encomium on him for his excellent learning.

In Origen's time, Hercules, a presbyter of Alexandria, for five years together, frequented the schools of the philosophers, and put on the philosophic pallium, and was very conversant in the books of the Grecian learning.

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At Cæsarea among the christians, there was an eminent school of learning for all branches of literature : such were the famous Pamphilus : and Eusebius was so great an admirer of him, that ever after he was called Eusebius Pamphili. At Antioch was Dorotheus, as Nicephorus informs us, a person versed in all kinds of ingenious literature. Anetolius, bishop of Laodicea, one versed in geometry, astronomy, and all kinds of philosophy, as well as in the doctrine of Christ. We find in those early days of the Greek church, what excellent persons many of those were, who were zealous professors of christianity.

As to the Latin church, St. Austin was a star of the first magnitude among them. Tertullian, Arnobius, and several others, may be deservedly added to them. St. Austin justly observes, that though the Israelites went rich out of Egypt, yet it was their eating the passover, which saved them from destruction. And though these men had the ornaments of human learning, yet it was their eating the true passover, (which was Christ, by their adhering to his doctrine) that was of more advantage to them, than all their other accomplishments. Therefore as we find in the first ages of christianity, not only innumerable multitudes of persons of great integrity and sobriety in their lives and conversations, who embraced the doctrine of Christ, but also many persons that were very inquisitive enquirers after truth, and the reason and nature of things ; we can find no just cause to distrust such a testimony, which was received in so unanimous a manner, by persons as well

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qualified

qualified to judge of the truth and reality of it, and as fearful of being deceived with reference to them, as any one in that present age possibly can be, yea much better, by reason of their living almost sixteen hundred centuries nearer the time of the blessed Jesus's appearance in the world. Therefore as this testimony was received by persons who were very curious searchers after the truth and nature of things, so the doctrine conveyed by it was a matter of the highest moment. Consequently we cannot but conceive, that persons originally inquisitive about other things, would be more than ordinary so about this, because their eternal welfare and happiness did depend upon it. All persons that are in reality truly religious, must at least be supposed to be very inquisitive after the state and condition of their souls, especially upon a testimony, if they had little or no assurance of the truth of it.

+ That none of all these persons who were rational and judicious in all human knowledge, should be able to discover the falsity, if any. It is not reconcilable with the general presumption of mankind concerning Divine Providence, and the care God takes of them, to suppose so many persons who sincerely desire to serve God in that way and manner which is most pleasing to him, to go on in such a continual delusion, and never have it at all discovered to them. If all those who have believed in the doctrine of Christ to be the only way to salvation have been deceived, we must either deny altogether a Divine Providence, or say, the devil hath more power to deceive mankind, than God to direct them, which is worse than the former; or else assert, that

that there are no such beings as either God or Devil, but that all things came to pass by blind chance and fortune. If so, it makes it still more inexplicable why such multitudes of rational creatures, the thoughtful, serious, inquisitive part of mankind, as to such things, should all be possessed with the truth and certainty of them; and the greater the reprobate, the more ignorant, wicked, and profane any persons are, the more prone they are to mock and deride the religious and inquisitive part of mankind, who believe them. If such persons see more into reason and truth than the sober and judicious part of mankind, let us bid adieu to humanity, and adore the brutes, if we admire their judgments most, who come the nearest to them.

The multitudes of the beforementioned persons consenting to the truths of the gospel of Christ, could have no other engagements to this consent, but only their firm perswasion of the truth of the doctrine conveyed by it, by reason they who unanimously agree in it, are such persons whose other design and interest in the world differ as much as men's do. If it had only been a consent of Jews, there might have been some probable pretence to have suspected a matter of interest in it. But as to this thing, we find the Jews divided amongst themselves concerning it, do yet inviolably preserve those sacred records amongst them, from which the truth of the doctrine of Christ may be undoubtedly proved.

Had the christian religion been enforced upon the world by the Roman emperors at the time of its promulgation, there would have been some sufficient sus-

picion of a particular design in it; but on the contrary, though it came with no other authority or strength but the evidence of its own truth, yet it made a strange and sudden alteration among persons of all nations and degrees of men in a very short time, making its way into the very heart of the Roman empire, spreading itself so much, as that all sorts and conditions of men, in innumerable places, were suddenly become christians. What common tie could there be to unite all these persons, if the undoubted truth and certainty of the doctrine of Christ had not, which was first preached to them by those persons who were eye witnesses of Christ's actions, and had left sacred records concerning the very quintessence of the doctrines of Christ, those admirable instructions, which were their only sure and certain guide to heaven.

There are innumerable persons who do acknowledge the truth of christianity, and yet could heartily wish that the doctrines of it were not true: such are all those persons who are sensual in their lives, and walk not agreeable to the rules of the gospel, yet dare not question or deny the truth of it. Such who could heartily wish there was no future state, nor judgment to come, that they might indulge themselves in this world without fear of another: and yet their consciences are so far convinced of, and awed by the truth of it, that they raise many perplexities and anxieties in their minds, which they would be most willingly rid of, and which they never thoroughly can be, till instead of having the name of christians, or being professors only, they come to live the life of christians, and are
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the disciples indeed of the blessed Jesus ; and are become experimentally acquainted with the truth and power of the holy religion of Jesus, which he has assured mankind shall be the happy case of all those who " hath his commandments and keepeth them, by manifesting himself to such in a very peculiar way and manner," as promised by him, recorded in John xiv. 21. " who shall know the truth so as to make them free," John viii. 32. and be fully satisfied in themselves, " the doctrine is from God," vii. 17.

Therefore we find the more mankind have been acquainted with the practice of christianity, the greater evidence they have had of the truth of it, and consequently have been more fully and rationally persuaded of its veracity. There are such powerful evidences of the truth of the doctrine of Christ, by the effectual workings of the spirit of God upon their souls, that all other arguments, as to their own satisfaction, may and do fall short of these. The poet Dautes is very pertinent and significant, when he had introduced St. Peter, asking him what it was his faith was founded on, he answers, that the spirit of God doth so fully discover itself both in the Old and New Testament, that all other arguments are but dull and heavy, if compared with it.

A truly enlightened conscience, a real vital christian, discovers so much beauty, excellency, and dignity in the sacred scriptures, that they charm and ravish the soul, which is unable to give a just idea of it to others, who are not thus experienced, by reason the eyes of their understandings are not illuminated to

see its beauty and excellency, which a mind truly gracious is invested with. How common is it in the world to find the attraction of beauty to be an unaccountable thing? One person does discover beauty and charms in some things, which others look on as mean and ordinary, if not contemptible; and why may not it be much more so in spiritual and divine things, by those who want spiritual eyes to discover them? Therefore it is, that good men enjoy that satisfaction in their own conscience, relating to the truth of the gospel, which others do not attain to, though they likewise see the most rational, strong, and convincing evidences, which induces them to believe its divine authority; which evidence is then most convincing, when it is seconded by the peculiar energy of the spirit of God upon their souls: but yet we see the power and force of the truth of these things may be so great, even upon such minds which are not yet moulded into the fashion of true goodness, that it does awe with its light and clearness, where it does not soften and alter by its heat and influence. Therefore whence cometh to pass that such powerful convictions should stick so close to the consciences of those who would fain pull out those piercing arrows, but that they find a greater power in them than they are masters of? therefore they cannot stand against the force with which they come upon them, neither find any salve to cure the wounds which are made within them, but by those very weapons which were the causes of them: and therefore when wicked persons under conflicts of conscience, cannot ease themselves by direct atheism, or finding reasons to cast off such convictions, by discovering any invalidity in
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the testimony whereon the truth of these things depend, it is a certain and sure argument that there is abundance of truth in that testimony, when mankind would endeavour to persuade themselves to believe the contrary, and yet cannot. The truth of this consent appears from the unanimity of it among those persons who have yet strangely differed from each other in many controversies in religion. We see hereby that this unanimity is no forced or designed thing, because we see the persons agreeing in this, do very much disagree from each other in other things; and the same grounds and reasons wherein they disagree as to other things, would have held as these too, was there no greater evidence of the certainty of these things than of those they disagree in. It is not a question among those who differ so much about the sense of scripture, whether the scripture itself be the word of God, although the very accounts on which mankind believe it to be so hath been the subject of no mean controversy.

All the different denominations of christians in the whole world do agree in the matters of fact relative to it.

That there was such a person as Jesus Christ, and that he did many great and wonderful miracles; that he was crucified at Jerusalem, and rose again from the dead the third day; now these facts contain the great superstructure of the christian faith: and therefore the multitude of other controversies in the world ought to be so far from weakening our faith as to the truth of the doctrine of Christ (which men of weak judgments, and atheistical and deistical spirits pretend) that it ought to

be a strong confirmation of it, when we see persons who peevishly quarrel with each other about some inferior and less weighty parts of religion, do yet unanimously consent in the principal foundation of christian faith, and such whereon the necessity of faith and obedience, as the way to salvation, does more immediately depend.

And this may be one great reason why the infinitely wise God may suffer such lamentable contentions and divisions to be in the christian church, that thereby inquisitive persons may see if the christian religion had been a mere design of some politic persons, the quarrelsome world (where it is not held in by force) would never have consented so long in the owning such common principles which all their other controversies are built upon ; and although it be continually seen that in divided parties one man is apt to run from any thing which is received by the other, and men do generally think they can never run far enough from those whose errors they have once discovered, yet this principle hath not carried any considerable party of the christian world (out of their indignation against those great corruptions which have crept into the world under a pretence of religion) to the disowning of the foundation of the christian faith, which must be partly imputed to the signal hand of Divine Providence, and partly to those strong evidences which there are of the truth of that testimony which conveys to us the foundation of the christian faith.

Thus we see how great and uncontroled this consent is, as to the matters of fact delivered down from
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the eye-witnesses of them concerning the actions and miracles of the blessed Jesus (which are contained in the holy scriptures as authentic records of them) and what a sure foundation there is for a firm assent to the truth of the thing it contains from so universal and uninterrupted a tradition.

No rational account can be given for the admirable success which the gospel met with in the world in its preaching, unless the doctrine and miracles of the blessed Jesus were undoubtedly true.

That the gospel of Christ has been propagated with very wonderful success is extremely evident from the long continuance of it in the European part of the world.

That this wonderful success should be an evidence of the truth of it will appear, if we consider how the doctrine itself was contrary to the general inclinations of the world, and how the propagation of it was so much opposed by all worldly power. The doctrine may be considered either as to its credenda, or matters of faith; or as to its agenda, or matters of life and practice: both these were contrary to the inclinations of the world; the former seemed hard and incredible, the latter harsh and impossible. The matters of faith which are to be believed by the world, were no such things which we may imagine the vulgar part of mankind would be very forward to run after, or embrace, because contrary to the principles of their education, and the religion they were brought up in. The generality of mankind are very tenacious of those principles and prejudices which are sucked in at the time of their childhood and youth.

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There are some religions, the articles whereof are so wild and monstrous, one would think it were impossible that any rational creature should believe them : but they believe them mostly or only for this poor reason, because they are bred up under them : for most certainly it is a very great advantage, that any religion has against another, that it comes to speak first, and thereby insinuates such an apprehension of itself to the mind, that becomes very difficult ever after to remove its prejudices, and so can't be easily brought to alter their opinion and judgment, though it be proposed in the most rational and convincing way and manner.

All those who have been bred up under paganism and the most gross idolatry, have therefore a very prevailing prejudice against such a doctrine, which was intirely irreconcilable with that religion which they had been devoted to. The stronger any prejudices are fixed in the minds of mankind by education and custom, the greater strength and power must that necessarily be in the gospel of Christ, which did so effectually demolish these strong holds, and captivate the understandings of mankind to the obedience of Christ.

Therefore Arnobius (Arnob. c. gentes l. i.) tells the heathens that it is impossible to suppose so many persons of so many nations to be so far besotted and infatuated, as not only to believe a religion to be true, which was contrary to that they were educated in, but to venture their lives as well as estates upon it, had it not been discovered to them in a most certain and infallible way, by such who had been eye-witnesses of the actions and miracles of Christ and his apostles.

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This therefore is sufficient to persuade and convince men on what firm foundations the faith of christians stands, when in so short a time it was spread over all parts of the world ; and by the gospel the most barbarous, inhuman nations were softened into more than mere civility.

That men of the greatest wit and parts, Orators, Grammarians, Rhetoricians, Lawyers, Physicians, Philosophers, have forsaken their former sentiments, and have very cordially embraced the doctrine of the blessed Jesus. Therefore if the power of education be so strong upon the minds of mankind, to persuade them of the truth of the religion they are bred up under, (which atheistical and you deistically disposed persons make advantage of) this is so far from weakening the truth of christianity, that it proves a great confirmation of it : its having obtained such great success upon its first preaching in the world, and notwithstanding the highest prejudices from education were against it. If then mankind be so prone to believe that to be most true which they have only been educated under, it must argue a more than ordinary evidence and power in Christ's religion, which unsettles, yea eradicates the very principles of their education ; which not only causes them to question the truth of them, but totally renounce them, and embrace a religion diametrically opposite to them. If we consider the inveterate prejudices the principles of their education were backed with among the heathens ; when the gospel of the blessed Jesus was first made known to them, and what plausible pretences they had of continuing in this religion which they were brought up in,

In, such as the pretended antiquity of it above the christian, it is to be wondered that so many were so soon and easy prevailed with to overcome their prejudice. The grand thing pleaded against the christians was, that they thought themselves wiser than their forefathers. Cotta in Tully, *De Nat. Deorum*, l. 3. laid this down, that the main principle of Pagan religion was, to believe the tradition of their forefathers, although there be no existence in reason for it. And after he had discovered the vanity of the stoical arguments about religion, concludes with this, as the only thing that he resolved his religion into, as follows :

“ It is enough for us (say they) that it comes by tradition from our forefathers.”

Lactantius fully sets forth the manner of pleading used by the heathens against the christians in the point of antiquity, *Lactant. de Orig. Error.* l. 2. c. 6. That they counted tradition infallible, and knew no other way to find the truth of religion, but by its being conveyed down to them from their forefathers.

How similar do such persons plead, who contend for the corruptions crept into the christian church, who make use of the same weak pretences for them, viz. that they were delivered down from the Fathers? Who are you (say they) that will see farther than antiquity? Now the very same arguments by which the professors of christianity justified the truth of their religion, (notwithstanding this pretended antiquity) will, with equal force, hold for a reformation of such inveterate abuses, which, under a pretence of antiquity, have crept into the christian church.

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Where reason and mere authority stands in opposition, he must be of a very weak understanding that knows not on which side to determine, with the greatest strength of argument, the justest way of reasoning. *1333*

Arnobius speaks thus, c. gent. l. 2. when mankind are charged with revolting from the religion of their forefathers, the fact is not presently to be condemned, but men are to see to examine the reasons of it. Neither ought they so much to look at what religion they have left, as what it is they have embraced. If mere departing from the religion of our ancestors be the great fault, all those who own themselves to be christians were themselves guilty of it, when they revolted from heathenism. If it be here said the case is different, because there was sufficient reason for it, which there is not, as to the corruptions crept into the christian church: if so, then all the disputes are taken off from matter of fact, or from the causes inducing to it.

Therefore if the protestants be not able (as to the reasons and causes of their separations from the Romish church) to manifest that they were sufficient and rational to every unprejudiced reasonable mind, let them then be blamed and charged with heresy, but not before.

The rational and just definition of heresy is, that it holds and supports opinions contrary to the fundamental points of religion, which is the case of the church of Rome, who pronounces herself infallible, and that no christians of any other denomination are in a salvable condition. *On!*

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But as ignorance is an inseparable companion of impudence, it is the only possible excuse that can be made for them. As for those who know better, interest sways them, and they are more knaves than fools, for by their craft they get their wealth.

The principles of the Reformation are justifiable upon the same authority of reason which the embracing of christianity was, when mankind from among the heathens became christians, and that the arguments made use of by the Romish church against the Protestants separating from them, are such as would have justified a pagan philosopher too, in not embracing christianity: or if it be unlawful for any party of men to divide from others in matters of religion, which pretend antiquity and universality only, it had been unlawful for Philosophers to have deserted Paganism, as well as for Protestants to desert Popery: for according to the principles of the Romanists, the judgment in the case of the separation, and of the truth of religion, lies in the party from which they depart.

If we now do but apply this to the old Roman senate, or emperors, in the affair of the christian religion, and the dividing from the heathen worship, we shall quickly find how easy a matter it will be to make christianity itself a schism, and the doctrine of Christ the greatest heresy. But as strong as these pretences were then, or since, the power of the doctrine of Christ hath been so great as to conquer them, and thereby to manifest it was of God, when such potent prejudices were not able to withstand it; of which antipathy their
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first greatest charge against christians was that of novelty: that they introduced a strange and unheard-of Religion.

The common question then was, Where was your religion before Jesus of Nazareth? And the same question hath been since asked the Protestants by the Papists, Where was your religion before Luther? And the same answer which served them, will stand immovable now, viz. there, where no other true religion is to be found, I mean in the written word of God, which is only contained in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. For this was the grand weapon, whereby the primitive christians defended themselves against the assaults of paganism, notwithstanding its pretended universality. Settlements by laws of heathen worship were so much pretended and pleaded for, that as far as we can find by the history of the primitive church, the pretence on which the christian suffered was sedition, and opposing the established laws.

It appears by Tertullian, Apol. c. 38. that the christians were reckoned among unlawful assemblies: the politicians and statesmen were all for preserving the civil laws; they troubled not themselves much about any religion, but only that which was settled by their laws, which they sought to maintain and uphold; for this reason, because the acting contrary to it might cause some disturbance to the civil state.

There were several laws which the christians were brought under and condemned for the breach of. The law against conventicles, (as they were frequently pleased to stile them) which were the meetings of christians together; thence the places where the christians assembled

bled for the worship of God, were commonly called conventicles, *Observat. in Amor. l. 4.* The reason of it was because the heathens judged those assemblies of christians to be illegal societies. When the christians began to be somewhat numerous, and had, according to the principles of their religion, frequent assemblings for divine worship, and did confederate together (by such symbols as that of being washed with water, and eating and drinking together, which was all the heathens apprehended by their use of Baptism and the Lord's Supper) the proconsul and other magistrates in their several provinces brought the christians under their edicts, and so punished them for the breach of the laws.

It appears by Pliny, lib. x. cap. 97. in his epistle to Trajan, that this was the only or chief cause for which the wiser heathens did proceed against the christians : for we find the proconsul troubled not himself about the truth and evidence of the christian religion.

And when any christians were brought before him, he frequently interrogated them whether they were christians or not ; and if they persisted in it that they were, then he punished them, not so much for their religion, and for their stedfastness to the doctrines of Christ, as for the contempt of civil authority.

That which the christians now pleaded for themselves why they should not be reckoned among the factions of the people, was that which they gave in answer to Pliny, viz. that all that they were chargeable with was, that they on their solemn days met together for divine worship, and to covenant with each other only for the practice

tice of those things, which were as much for the good of mankind in general, as it was for their own, viz. that they would not injure and defraud others as to their bodies or estates ; but still christianity was looked on by them as a great innovation ; insomuch that the christians were accused of being enemies to mankind, as well as to their laws, by reason they drew more off from their superstitious religion, than ever any set of men had done before.

When St. Paul preached at Athens, the first accusation against him was, that he was a preacher of strange deities, because he preached to them " Jesus and the resurrection," Acts xvii. 18. And Demetrius at Ephesus knew no such potent argument against St. Paul, as that his religion destroyed the worship of Diana, whom all Asia and the world worshipped, Acts xix. 17.

The primitive christians were then accounted as it were antipodes to the whole world ; on which account they were severely dealt with. The reason or ground the heathens had for detesting the christians was, that the christians declared enmity against the idolatrous temples and worship of the heathens.

Sometimes the heathens rage and malice was so great as to accuse the christians with treason, and to pronounce them enemies to all civil government, by reason they would not sacrifice for the Emperor's safety. The accusations against them for treason lay, in their refusing to supplicate their idol gods for the Emperor's welfare. They would not swear by the Emperor's genius ; nevertheless they did not refuse to testify their allegiance, and

to swear by the Emperor's safety. However, they would not worship the Emperors as gods, which was then grown a common custom. Nay, the primitive christians were very scrupulous of calling the Emperor Dominus, or Lord, because the venerable name Lord was an attribute of God's, applied as a name to him only in holy writ. The reason of their scrupulosity was not from any question they made of the sovereignty of princes, or their obligation to their obedience to them, (which they were very free in the acknowledgment of) but from a jealousy and just suspicion that something of divine honour might be implied in it; especially as the adoration of princes was grown a custom. Neither would the christians observe their public festivals in the way and manner others did, which was attended with abundance of looseness and debauchery, by all sorts of persons, and was deemed and accounted by them a piece of real loyalty; which made the christians choose the hazard of losing their reputation of loyalty, than bear a part in such wickednesses then used.

They would have nothing to do either with the madness of the cirque, or the immodesty of the theatre, or the cruelty of the ampitheatre, or the vanity of the public wrestlings. Therefore we see what a hard task the primitive christians had, when so many laws were laid, as birdlime or traps in their way, to catch them; so that it was impossible for them to profess themselves christians, and not run into a præmunire by their laws; and therefore it cannot be conceived that many, out of affectation of novelty, should then declare themselves christians,

christians, when so much hazard attended the professing of christianity.

Soft spirited men, and lovers of their own ease, would have found some fine distinctions and nice evasions to have reconciled themselves to the public laws, by such things as the primitive christians so unanimously refused, because tending to profaneness or idolatry. Therefore the weapons whereby the apostles and primitive christians encountered the heathen world, were not fleshly or weak, but exceeding strong and powerful, in that they obtained so great a conquest, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. over the imaginations and carnal reasoning of men, (which were their strong holds they secured themselves in) as to make them readily forsake their heathen worship, and become chearful servants of Christ.

Thus we see the power of the doctrine of Christ, which prevailed over the principles of education, though backed with pretended antiquity, universality, and though established by civil laws : which will appear if we consider that not only the matters of faith were contrary to the principles of their education, but because many of them seemed to be incredible to the natural reason of mankind, that we cannot think persons would be ever forward to believe such things.

Every one almost being so very ready to take any advantage against a religion which did so little flatter corrupt nature, either as to its power or capacity ; inso-much that those who preached this doctrine, declared openly to the world that such persons who would judge of the christian doctrine by such principles which mere

natural reason did proceed upon, (those whom St. Paul declared acknowledged nothing superior to natural reason, whereby to judge of divine truths) could not entertain matters of faith, or of divine revelation. But such things would seem but folly to them that owned no higher principles than philosophy, or that did not believe such a divine revelation. Such persons cannot know them by or from their philosophy. See 1 Cor. ii. 14. because a divine revelation is the only way to come to a thorough understanding of them.



And to such persons who do not believe such a divine revelation, it is impossible they should be competent judges of the doctrine of Christ; so that the only ground of receiving the doctrine of the gospel is upon a divine revelation or declaration, that God himself, by his only begotten and well-beloved son, and his apostles, hath revealed or declared these grand and important mysteries to the world as truth. On which account it is, we are in duty and gratitude bound to receive them, although they are infinitely superior to our poor, short-sighted, limited understandings and comprehensions.

But we see generally in the world how few of those did believe the doctrine of Christ, in comparison to those who were the great admirers of the philosophy and way of learning which was then in vogue, and so much cried up. The reason was, because christianity not only contained far deeper truths and mysteries than any they were acquainted with, but were delivered too in a way of great authority, commanding them to believe the doctrine

doctrine they preached, on the account of the divine authority of the revealers of it. Such manner of proposal of doctrines to the world the philosophers of the Greeks were unacquainted with, which on that account they derided, not being suited to the exact method which their sciences proceeded on.

No doubt, if the apostles had come among the Greeks with a great deal of pomp and ostentation, and had fed men's curiosities with vain and unnecessary speculations, they might have had as many followers among the Greeks, for their sakes, as Christ had among the Jews for the sake of the loaves and fishes. But the affairs of the gospel being of more inward worth and moment, than of outward pomp and show, the vain and empty Greeks presently had a quarrel with the manner of proposing them, as that they came not in a way of clear demonstration, but insisted so much upon faith as soon as they were delivered.

Thence Celsus and Galen thought they had reason enough to reject the laws of Moses, and of Christ, because Celsus found that they were such doctrines which required faith and obedience, without giving the reason of mankind (as they thought) an account of the things commanded; as if the authority of the great legislator Christ, sufficiently manifested, was not enough to enforce a law, unless a sufficient account were given of the things required, to the purblind reason of every individual person's actuated passions and private interests, as to the justice and equity of it. And so the primary obligations to faith and obe-

dience, on the part of mankind, must arise not from the evidence of divine authority, but of the thing itself, which is revealed to the most impartial judgment of every one to whom it is proposed: which those who are sensible how short and limited the stock of reason is, at the best, in mankind, and how easily that which they have, is moulded and fashioned, according to prejudices and interest already entertained, will look upon only as a design to comply with the carnal desires of mankind, in that thereby none shall be bound to go any further than their blind and corrupted mind shall lead them.

Now these being the terms on which the gospel of Christ must have expected entertainment in the gentile world, how impossible had it been ever to have found any success amongst mankind, had there not been a sufficient evidence given to it, by the power of miracles? That however strange and incredible the doctrine might have seemed, yet it was to be believed, because there was sufficient means to convince mankind it was of divine revelation. Neither were those matters of faith contrary only to the corrupt inclinations of the world, but likewise were the precepts of life; so also are those things in christianity which concerned practice.

There are two grand things which are the main scope and design of christianity, necessary to take mankind off from their sins and the world, and of all things these are they which the hearts of mankind are so incumbered with.

For

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For the precepts of the gospel are such which require the greatest purity of heart and life, Matth. v. 8. and which call upon mankind to deny themselves, Matth. xvi. 24. "and all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to
 "live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world, Titus ii. 12. "That they must be
 "cleansed from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit,
 "and must perfect holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Having named the name of Christ, they
 "must depart from all iniquity, 2 Tim. ii. 19. That
 "they must set their affections on things above, not on
 "things on the earth," Coloss. iii. 2. and that the gospel enforceth these precepts of holiness with the most terrible denunciations of the wrath of God on those who disobey them. That "the Lord Jesus Christ
 "shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that
 "know not God, and that obey not the gospel of Jesus
 "Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from
 "the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9. That
 "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all
 "ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold
 "the truth in unrighteousness," Rom. i. 18. That no person who lives in the habitual practice of any known sin, shall inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. "That no man should deceive them with
 "vain words: for because of these things cometh the
 "wrath of God upon the children of disobedience," Eph. v. 6. That mankind do but vainly flatter themselves, when they seek to reconcile unholy lives with

the hopes of future happiness: for the doctrine of the gospel positively declares, "that without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. And then in reference to things of this present life, which mankind busy themselves so much about, the gospel positively declares, that "they who love this world, the love of the Father is not in them, 1 John ii. 15. That the friendship of this world is enmity with God. Who-soever therefore will be a friend of the world, is enmity with God, James iv. 4. That they must not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18. For the conversation of real christians is in heaven," Philip. iii. 20. Therefore the blessed Jesus hath commanded them to "lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal," Matt. vi. 20. Now the whole design of the doctrine of Christ being to persuade mankind to lead a holy and heavenly life while they are in this world, "thereby to be made meet partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light," Coloss. i. 12.

Therefore can we think such numbers of persons whose hearts were wedded to sin and the world, could so suddenly have been brought off from both these enchantments, without a divine power accompanying that doctrine which was preached to them? St. Paul declared, "He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, it being the power of God unto salvation,"

" Rom.

Rom. i. 16. for indeed, no other power could be thus prevalent.

Though the gospel of Christ be the only true mystery, yet the propagators of it do not do by it as the heathens are wont to do with their famous Eleusinian mysteries, which was kept so secret by all the mystæ. St. Paul declares he knew no reason he had to be ashamed of any thing in the eyes of the gospel, that he should labour its concealment, or should not advance its veneration ; for the more public the gospel is, the more it manifests its power, for through it God is pleased mightily to work, in order to the salvation both of Jew and Gentile : and of all the success of the gospel, that upon the lives of mankind deserves the greatest consideration. The great efficacy and power of the gospel was abundantly seen in that great alteration which it wrought in all those who were the hearty embracers of it.

The philosophers did very frequently and deservedly complain of the great inefficacy of all their moral precepts upon the minds of mankind, and that by all their instructions they improved more in knowledge than in real goodness. But now christianity not only enforced greater duties on mankind with greater power and authority ; for the scriptures does, as St. Austin speaks, not make some obstreperous, or clamorous, like those tinkling cymbals the philosophers, but it awes the souls of mankind with the majesty of that God from whom they come. Neither was it a great and empty sound, which was heard in the preaching of the gospel ; but
when

when God thundered therein, he “ broke down the
 “ stately cedars, and shook the wilderness, and made
 “ the hind to calve, and discovered the forests : and in
 “ his temple doth every one speak his glory,” Ps. xxix.
 5. 8, 9. He humbled the pride of mankind, unsettled
 the gentile world from its former foundations, and
 wrought great alterations on all those who attended it,
 so as to obey it.

The whole design of the gospel is comprized in those
 words which St. Paul assures us were spoken to him by
 the blessed Jesus himself, when he ordained him to be
 his apostle, which was, “ to open men’s eyes, and to
 “ turn them from darkness to light, and from the
 “ power of Satan unto God ; that they might receive
 “ forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them
 “ which are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ,” Acts
 xxvi. 18. And the efficacy of this doctrine, in order
 to these great ends, was abundantly seen in the preach-
 ing of that apostle, who was most instrumental in
 converting mankind to sobriety and holiness.

What strange persons were the Corinthians, before
 they were converted to christianity ? for when St. Paul
 had enumerated many or most of the vilest and most
 abominable practices of mankind, he immediately adds,
 “ and such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but
 “ ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of
 “ the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God,” 1 Cor.
 vi. 10, 11.

The more dangerous any distemper is, the more
 malignant is its nature, the more inveterate its continu-
 ance,

ance, the greater must be the efficacy of the remedy, which works the cure of it, and the power of grace is therefore certainly the more seen in conversion, the greater the sins have been before it.

It is an easier matter for to remove a disease on its first onset, than it is to cure it, when it is of a very long continuance.

Now the grand power and efficacy of the gospel wrought upon all sorts and kinds of persons, to manifest to the world there was no distemper of men's souls so great but there was a possibility of a remedy for it; and not only so, but pregnant and visible instances were given of the power and efficacy of it; for they themselves shew oft, saith St. Paul, " what manner of
 " entering in we had among you, and how ye turned
 " unto God from idols to serve the living and true
 " God, and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he
 " raised from the dead; even Jesus, which delivered us
 " from the wrath to come," 1 Theff. i. 9, 10. Now that which manifested the exceeding great power and excellency of the gospel was, that it not only turned men from one way of worship to another, which is an affair of some difficulty, but that it turned men also together with that, from their lusts and sensuality, to a holy and unblameable life: for sinners being more in love with their sins than opinions, it must necessarily be a greater power which draws mankind from the practice of habitual sins, than that which makes them only change their opinions, or alter the way of worship they were brought up in.

This

This is that which Origen, throughout his works against Celsus, triumphs in, as the most signal evidence of a divine power in the doctrine of Christ, that it wrought so great an alteration in all those that truly embraced it : those who were vicious, debauched and dissolute, it made them temperate, sober and religious.

The doctrine of Christ converted the most wicked who villified it, (from all their debaucheries) to a life most suitable to nature and reason, and to the practice of all virtues ; therefore certainly the gospel could not want that commendation among all the ingenuous moralists, that it was the most excellent instrument in the world to reform the lives of mankind, and to promote real goodness in it, when they could not but take notice of so many persons continually so brought off from their vain conversations and folly, to a life serious, sober, and unblameable ; nay, and some of the christians were persons of so much integrity and goodness, that their greatest enemies were forced to say that their only fault was that they were real christians. “ Bonus “ vir cujus tantum quod christianus, (a very good man, “ only a christian) :” but one would have thought this should have made them have a higher opinion of christianity, when it did so suddenly make so many good men in the world ; especially when this power was so manifested on persons who were supposed incapable of being reformed by philosophy ; young, illiterate, mean-spirited persons.

Therefore it may be justly supposed that it was not by the strength of their own reason that this alteration

was

was wrought within them, but by that divine power which was able to tame the most unruly, to instruct the most ignorant, to raise up the most sordid persons to such a generous temper, as to slight the good things of this life, in comparison of those which are to come. And so remarkable was the difference of life then between those who were christians, and those who were not, (as there is now between a real vital christian and a libertine, a free-thinker) that Origen therefore dares Celsus for to compare them, in point of morality, with any other societies of mankind in the world; for the churches of God which are disciples to Christ, when compared with other societies, shine among them like lights in the world; for who can but confess that even the very worst part of the christian churches exceeds the best of the popular assemblies? for he assures him that the church of God which was at Athens was very quiet and peaceable, because it sought to approve itself only to God; but the popular assemblies at Athens were seditious and quarrellsome, and in nothing comparable to the church of Christ there: so it is, if we compare the churches of Corinth and Alexandria with the assemblies of the people there. So that any candid enquirer after truth will exceedingly wonder, (how such a fair island should appear in the midst of such a sea of wickedness as was in these cities; and how these churches of God should be planted in such rude and profane places: so the same author goes on to compare the church's senate with that of the city's. The church officers, with theirs of the assembly, appealed and declared that those among them who were most lukewarm in their office, did yet far exceed

ceed all the city magistrates in all manner of virtues. Now if these things be so, how reasonable and becoming is it that all vital christians should admire and adore the divine power and goodness of God, who brought about and accomplished such glorious designs and ends by his only begotten Son, and that not only for the conversion and salvation of a few, but of great multitudes? The twelve apostles were the first fruits of this plentiful harvest of converts which afterwards succeeded; and although Celsus (an Epicurean) seems to deny the possibility of any such thing as conversion, by reason customary sins become a second nature, that no punishment can reform them, yet, saith Origen, he not only contradicted us christians, but all such who acknowledged any generous principles of philosophy, and did not despair of recovering virtue, as a thing feasible by human nature; and gives instances to prove the possibility of it from the antient heroes, Hercules and Ulysses, and from the two philosophers Socrates and Musonius, and the two famous converts to philosophy, Phæden and Poleman: but yet, saith he, these are not so much to be wondered at, that the eloquence and reason of the philosophers should prevail on some very few persons, but that the mean and contemptible language of the apostles should convert such multitudes from intemperance to sobriety, from injustice to fair dealing, from cowardice to the highest constancy, yea, so great too as to lay down their very lives for the sake of virtue.

How then can we but admire so divine a power as was seen in it! therefore it is so far from being impossible, that it is not at all difficult for corrupt nature to be altered

tered and changed by the rich grace of God, in preaching the glorious gospel of Christ.

Lactantius excellently manifests, that philosophy could never do so much good in the world as christianity did, by reason that was not suited at all to common capacities, and did require so much still in the acts to prepare men for it; therefore it was impossible all should be well skilled in it, who yet are as capable of being happy as any others are; and how inefficacious the principles of philosophy were to make them completely happy appeared by the philosophers themselves, who were very far from having conquered their masterly passions, and were frequently obliged to acknowledge that nature was too headstrong to be helped by such weak reins as the precepts of philosophy were.

The great influence that divine precepts have upon the souls of mankind daily experience convinces every rational mind of; for those who before were passionate, covetous, fearful, lustful, cruel, unjust, vicious, upon their being christians became mild, liberal, courageous, temperate, merciful, just, unblameable, which never any were brought to by mere philosophy, but rather taught the art of concealing vices, than of healing them.

But now when christianity was so effectual in the cure of these distempers, which philosophy gave over as incurable, and cured them with so great success, and that not in a Paracelsian way, for them to relapse afterwards with greater violence; but it did so thoroughly unsettle the fomes morbi, that it should never get so great a head

head again. Does not this argue a power more than philosophical, which could be nothing less than divine power, that tended so much to reform all mankind, and promote real virtue and goodness throughout the world?

When we consider what continual opposition christianity met with from worldly power and policy, we shall find it impossible, that if it had been a cunningly devised fable, or any mere contrivance of impostors, but that it must have been discovered, when the most potent and subtle persons bent their whole wits to discover it. It was the master design of the Roman emperors Julian and Dioclesian, to root out and abolish christianity. And was it only the subtilty of the christians which made these potentates give over their pursuit in despair of accomplishing it? If the christians were such subtle people, whence came all their enemies to agree in one common calumny, that they were a company of poor, weak, ignorant, inconsiderate men; and if they were so, how came it to pass that by all the power and wisdom of magistracy and philosophy they could never exterminate these poor silly christians, but on the contrary, as they cut them down, they grew up the faster, and so increased by persecution, as was surprising truly?

Therefore it must necessarily follow, that there must be something more than ordinary, and very peculiar, in christianity, from all other religions, it not being advanced or promoted by any civil powers, but on the contrary opposed by them, and yet it gained ground by this tyranny.

Therefore it is an observable circumstance, that the first christian Emperor (who acted as Emperor in defence

fence of the christian faith) viz. Constantine, who did not appear in the world till christianity had spread itself over most parts of the habitable world : God thereby letting us see that though the civil power, when become christian, might be very useful for the protecting of christianity, yet that he stood in no need at all of it, in order to propagate it abroad in the world. But we find it was quite otherwise in that religion which had Mars its ascendant, (Mahometism) for, like Paracelsus his dæmon, it always sat upon the pommel of the sword, and made its way in the world merely by force and violence ; and as its first constitution had much of blood in it, so by the same way hath it been fed and nourished ever since. But it was quite otherwise with the christian religion : this never thrived better than in the most barren places, nor triumphed more than when it suffered most ; nor spread itself farther than when it encountered the greatest opposition. And herein was seen the great force and efficacy of the doctrine of Christ, that it bore up men's spirits under the greatest miseries of life, and made them with chearfulness to undergo the most exquisite torments, which the cruelty of tyrants could invent or inflict.

The Stoics and Epicureans boast that their wise men would be happy in the bull of Phalaris, were but empty and Thrafonical words ; which none would venture the truth of by an experiment upon themselves.

It was the Christian alone, and not the Epicurean, that could truly say, in the midst of torments, " Suave est & nihil curo : " and might justly alter a little of that common saying of the christians, and say, " Non magna

“loquimur, sed patimur,” as well as vivimus, i. e. the christians did not speak great things, but do and suffer them; and this gained not only great reputation of integrity to themselves, but advanced the honour of their religion in the world, when it was so apparently seen that no force or power was able to withstand it. Will not this persuade and convince you that the christian religion comes from God, (is divine) consequently infallibly true? You see that no fears, penalties or torments were able to make a christian alter his profession, who with cheerfulness would rather bid adieu to life, than to his Saviour. This Origen likewise frequently takes notice of, when Celsus had objected against the novelty of christianity, “the more wonderful it is, (saith Origen) that in so short a time it should so largely spread itself in the world; for if the cure of men’s bodies is not wrought without a divine permissive providence, how much less the cure of so many thousands of souls, which have been converted at once to humanity and christianity; especially when all the powers in the world were, from the first propagation of it, engaged to hinder the growth and progress of this glorious doctrine of the blessed Jesus? And yet, notwithstanding all the opposition of men and devils, the word of God grew and multiplied greatly, Acts vi. 7. and increased in number daily, Acts xvi. 5. and at length became masters over all its enemies, and not only spread itself quite through Greece, but through a great part of the world besides, and converted an innumerable company of souls to the true worship and service of God.

Thus

Thus it is manifest to every reflecting, rational mind, from all the concomitant circumstances of the propagation of the glorious gospel of the blessed Jesus, that nothing less than a divine power accompanying it was sufficient to oppose and destroy the fury of worldly power and policy, and the prejudice, obstinacy and malice of unbelievers, and to prevail on such an innumerable number of persons, contrary to the principles of their education, and to their indulged passions and vices, to their pride and covetousness, to shake off all these their golden chains and fetters, and put on the yoke of Christ, "and learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart, Matt. xi. 29. crucifying their flesh, with the affections and lusts, Gal. v. 24. "mortifying their members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness; putting off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication, having put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him, Coloss. iii. 5, 8, 9, 10. The eyes of their understanding being opened, and turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in the blessed Jesus," Acts xxvi. 18. God grant this may be your happy condition, that you may in reality know so as to experience with great pleasure and delight, in this your day, the things that belong to your peace and comfort in this world, and those which will be for your unspeakable joy and happiness in the world to

come, before they are for ever hid from your eyes; Therefore let me earnestly beseech you so as to prevail with you not to wander any longer in the stupid, wild, ridiculous mazes of infidelity, “ but seek the Lord “ while he may be found; call upon him while he is “ near,” Isa. lv. 6. Labour to procure the knowledge of God’s will, and to obtain his grace and favour. Search after the light of life, the Lord Jesus Christ; hearken to his instructions, obey his precepts.

Do you not judge it fit and rational to follow after righteousness, in order to obtain everlasting happiness? If so, “ look unto the rock whence ye are “ hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are dig- “ ged, Isa. li. 1. Have you not changed your glory for “ that which doth not profit? Be astonished, O ye hea- “ vens! at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very de- “ solate, saith the Lord, for my people hath commit- “ ted two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of “ living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken “ cisterns, that can hold no water, Jer. ii. 12, 13. There- “ fore henceforth be no more children, tossed to and “ fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine “ by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, where- “ by they lie in wait to deceive,” Eph. iv. 14. Beware of false teachers, whom St. Peter hath pro- phesied “ shall privily bring in damnable heresies, “ even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring “ upon themselves swift destruction, 2 Peter ii. 1. who “ were before of old ordained to this condemnation, “ ungodly men turning the grace of our God into la- “ sciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and “ our

“ our Lord Jesus Christ, Jude iv. Let no man deceive
 “ you with vain words, for because of these things
 “ cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience ; be not ye therefore partakers with them,”
 Eph. v. 6, 7. but open your minds and hearts to conviction ; root out, extricate from thence all obstinacy ; shake off prejudices of every kind, in order that you may receive the truth in the love of it. You that have heard of the grand embassy of the only begotten Son of God : you that have given little or no attention to it ; you that have read the glorious gospel of Christ cursorily, with less credulity than you give to a common blundering, right or wrong news-paper, do not trifle away your precious time any longer. “ Wherefore do you
 “ spend your money for that which is not bread ; and
 “ your labour for that which satisfieth not ? hearken
 “ diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good,
 “ and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline
 “ your ear, and go unto Christ, and your soul shall
 “ live,” Isa. lv. 2, 3. Receive the divine word of his grace with humility and reverence, attention and candour, with an honest upright heart, desirous of believing and knowing the truth. Make it your principal study frequently and seriously to meditate on it. Impartially view and well weigh the whole design and tendency of christianity, and you will find it entirely calculated to make mankind holy and good, like God himself, who sent redemption to his people ; “ who so loved the
 “ world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have
 “ everlasting life, John iii. 16. Who gave himself for
 “ our sins, that he might deliver us from this present
 “ evil.

“ evil world, according to the will of God and our Fa-
 “ ther, Gal. i. 4. who was wounded for our transgres-
 “ sions, and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement
 “ of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes are
 “ we healed,” Isa. liii. 5. dispelling the sting of death
 out of our corrupted polluted nature, who bore our sins
 in his own body on the tree, and that for no other
 reason, consideration, or motive whatever, “ than that
 “ mankind might become dead to sin, and might live
 “ unto righteousness, 1 Peter ii. 24. in order to make
 “ us meet partakers of the saints in light, Colof. 1. 12.
 “ and to receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away,
 “ 1 Peter v. 4. a crown of righteousness, which the
 “ Lord the righteous Judge shall give unto all them
 “ that love his appearing, 2 Tim. iv. 8. who will ren-
 “ der unto every man according to his deeds ; to them
 “ who by patient continuance in well doing seek for
 “ glory, honour, and immortality ; eternal life : but
 “ unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the
 “ the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and
 “ wrath, tribulation and anguish, unto every soul of
 “ man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the
 “ Gentile ; but glory honour and peace to every man
 “ that worketh good ; to the Jew first, and also to the
 “ Gentile : for there is no respect of persons with
 “ God, Rom. ii. 6. to 12. Be not deceived, God is not
 “ mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he
 “ also reap ; for he that soweth to his flesh shall of his
 “ flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spi-
 “ rit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting,” Gal. vi. 7,
 8. Therefore let me beseech you to examine your own
 hearts,

hearts whether it is your inclination and desire to be such persons in all respects as the sublime religion of the blessed Jesus requires mankind to be, which your consciences must tell you is rational.



Would you be best pleased to find his religion true or false? are you willing to rest satisfied in your incredulity, and so think no more about it? Consider, if you have any beloved, accustomed, favourite passions which you like to indulge, and that are contrary to the purity and holiness of the doctrine of Christ, and which you vainly imagine the religion of nature does not forbid you, but may indulge without incurring the displeasure of almighty God.

If this is your real case, which is very much to be feared is the case of many, what will be the consequence of all such Deists or Freethinkers, who desire and endeavour not to believe in divine revelation, I answer, the consequence of all such will be, that they will not be at any pains in order to find it true: they will not so much as pray to almighty God to enlighten their understandings in order to receive the truth in the love of it, by reason they do not desire the christian religion to be true, the morals of it being too refined for them; they don't indulge brutish sensuality.



Christianity requires purity of heart and holiness of life. It commands men to set bounds to all their passions, to the lust of their flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and requires them to be humbled, mortified, and subdued in heart, which is not at all pleasing to carnal minds, “ who love darkness rather than light, because
“ their deeds are evil, John iii. 19. for they hated the

“light, neither cometh to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov’d,” ver. 20. Therefore in order to stifle and silence their conscience, they will and do furnish their minds with every loose unrestrained principle, which has the least shadow of reason to favour their darling sins, their beloved vices. They will readily and chearfully embrace every audacious author that endeavours to undermine and invalidate the authenticity of the divine oracles, and love dearly the company of those that burlesque them, that are satyrical, witty in their vain imaginations, are wise in their own conceits : their favourites shall be those who can bring most arguments in order to ridicule christianity. Tis to be feared this is the disposition and practice of many of our modern fashionable deistical freethinkers, or, to speak more properly, inflav’d thinkers : because they are tied and chained with their lusts and passions, and therefore can’t think freely, no more than a slave can act freely.

To such pitiful persons, all the most cogent arguments christians are capable to bring, though set off with the greatest reason and eloquence, in order to recommend the refined, pure religion of the blessed Jesus, are of no service to those who are thus wilfully enslaved, blind and deaf.

You Deists would do well, exceeding well, and act rationally, thoroughly to consider and well weigh the reasons which the blessed Jesus has given, why so many unbelievers continue in their blindness and wilful obstinacy, which is as follows : “ This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil,” John iii. 19. No wonder then that
such

such enslaved thinkers and actors do not embrace the truth in the love of it, since their deeds or actions, and truth and goodness, is at such variance and enmity one with another. Therefore now my hearty and sincere prayer to almighty God is, that he would permit some sore affliction to befall all such enslaved thinkers and actors, in order to alarm, rouse and frighten them, so as that they might come to their right senses, and shake off their chains and fetters, which is the principal cause of their incredulity, that they may be desirous and willing to come to the knowledge of the truth, so as to be thoroughly convinced and converted, and become the disciples indeed of the blessed Jesus, vital christians, real believers.

Almighty God has declared that “ in the time of trouble mankind will say, arise and save us, Jer. ii. 27. in “ their affliction they will seek me early,” Hosea v. 15. The royal psalmist most piously acknowledged that before “ he was afflicted he went astray, but afterwards he “ kept God’s word; and again he absolutely declares “ that it was good for him that he had been afflicted, “ that he might learn the statutes of God. And that the “ law of his mouth was better unto him than thousands “ of gold and silver,” Psalms cxix. 71, 72. God almighty grant afflictions and calamities may have this genuine and happy effect on you; then you will think yourselves obliged to me for praying for afflictions for you, and be exceeding thankful to God for permitting them to befall you. O that you may see with your eyes and hear with your ears, and be converted and healed, which will be in reality your happy case, if with humility and sincerity, and fervency of soul, you pray to God, and hearken
to

to his word, and seek him, and search for him with all your heart, then he will be found of you, Jer. xxix. 12, 13, 14. God grant that you may know in this your day the things which belong to your everlasting peace, before the night of death comes, when they will be for ever hid from your eyes. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest," Eccl. ix. 10. Therefore delay not a moment to repent, and forsake your sins.

Is not this the voice both of natural and revealed religion? Does not the voice of God and his providence say now, and command you above all things to take hold of the present time? "Acquaint now thyself and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee, Job xxii. 21. Young people, remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, Eccl. xii. 1. "Turn ye all from your evil ways, and from your evil doings," Zech. i. 4. Delay not a moment on your peril.

Let a heathen shame you into a greater speed in this most absolutely necessary work: "How long (saith he) will you defer looking after the best things? how long will you abuse your reason?" Epict. En. c. 75. Consider that a very few hours, weeks, or months hence may be too late; thy day of grace over, death may have sealed thy irrevocable character. God will not always strive with the children of men; therefore how infinitely doth it concern you to improve the important Now; to accept of God's gracious offers and tender of mercy now. If you refuse now,
this

this may be the last offer. This may be the very momentous decisive crisis. Consider, your life stands on a very slippery foundation. A single breath, and you are gone. As death leaves you, judgment will find you. Here reflect seriously. Pause a while. God grant it may answer the best of ends.

The blessed Jesus hath declared to mankind, that “ they shall die in their sins, if they believe not in him,” John viii. 24. And St. Peter assures us, “ there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” Acts iv. 12. And St. Paul tells us, those who receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved, God shall send strong delusion that they should believe a lie : that “ they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness,” 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. and to those who believed not, “ God swore, “ they should not enter into his rest,” and Christ commissioned his disciples “ to go into all the world, and “ preach the gospel to every creature : he that believeth “ and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth “ not shall be damned,” Mark xvi. 15, 16. O let these terrible denunciations to all unbelievers awaken and rouse you out of your lethargic incredulity, your dreadful stupidity.

The possibility of being miserable to all eternity, one would think, is a sufficient argument for every rational mind, to make them in good earnest in relation to their spiritual condition, so as to cause them not to be easy and rest satisfied till they are thoroughly sensible and well assured that they are in the favour and friendship of almighty God, whose loving kindness is better than life, whose hatred is worse than death ; which is consonant

to the principles of natural religion, which you profess to believe in, as the existence of a God, his providence, virtue and vice, the immortality of the soul, and rewards and punishments after death. That God made mankind rational and accountable creatures, capable of doing good or evil, and consequently of pleasing or displeasing him, who will reward or punish them in a future state of being, as their behaviour have been in this world virtuous or vicious, all rational creatures are very sensible of.

Natural and revealed religion both acquiesce in these truths. St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, (which I look on as the key of the New Testament, if I may be allowed the expression) assures us “ that God will render to every
 “ man according to his deeds : to them who by patient
 “ continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour,
 “ and immortality ; eternal life : but unto them that
 “ are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey
 “ righteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and
 “ anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of
 “ the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But glory, honour,
 “ and peace, to every man that worketh good ; to
 “ the Jew first, and also to the Gentile ; for there is no
 “ respect of persons with God : for as many as have
 “ sinned without the law, shall perish without law ; and
 “ as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged
 “ by the law : for not the hearers of the law are just
 “ before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified :
 “ for when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by
 “ nature the things contained in the law, those having
 “ not the law, are a law unto themselves, which
 “ shew the work of the law written in their hearts ;
 “ their

" their conscience also bearing witness, and their
 " thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing
 " one another," Rom. ii. 6 to 16. and the blessed Jesus
 has informed mankind, that " that servant which
 " knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, nei-
 " ther did according to his will, shall be beaten with
 " many stripes : but he that knew not and did com-
 " mit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with
 " few stripes, Luke xii. 47, 48. for the Lord will
 " judge the world with righteousness, and the people
 " with is truth," Psalms xcvi. 13. You that do not
 believe in divine revelation must acknowledge and con-
 fess, these are all equitable and just declarations, and the
 sacred scriptures hath assured mankind that they will be
 put in execution at the grand and awful day of judgment :
 for they exactly agree with the voice of reason, and natu-
 ral religion. If you are not tainted with insanity, you
 must believe it.

I importunately beseech you (if you are in your
 right senses) to recollect and scrutinize your past
 thoughts, words and actions, relating to your obedi-
 ence or disobedience of the laws, rules, and directions
 of natural religion ; your behaviour towards God, your
 neighbour, and yourselves. Then, and not till then,
 you will act rationally, becoming a reasonable soul,
 as those that know must be called to a strict
 and solemn account before the awful and tremendous
 bar of God, the searcher of all hearts ; who knows the
 most secret recesses of the soul. " For there is not a crea-
 " ture that is not manifest in his sight, but all things
 " are naked, and open unto the eyes of him with whom
 " we have to do, Heb. iv. 13. for in him we live and
 move,

“ move, and have our being ;” as certain also some of your own poets have declared, Acts xvii. 28. If your thoughts accuse you, God is greater than your thoughts, and knoweth all things.

Reflect, consider, the heart is deceitful above all things “ desperately wicked ; who can know it ? but the Lord “ searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, even to give “ every man according to his ways and according to “ the fruit of his doing,” Jer. xvii, 9, 10. All these declarations you know are both just and reasonable, agreeable to your natural sentiments of God, and his future proceedings with mankind : therefore permit me as a sincere, hearty friend, one that earnestly desires to be of real service, to put the following questions with uprightness and impartiality to your own consciences, with a sincere design you should know your spiritual state and condition, in probing your ways to the bottom, in order that you may be enabled, by the grace of God, to rectify your past errors and miscarriages ; and for the future part of your life to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, which natural religion must tell you is acting rational.

Do you constantly reverence almighty God, the great preserver, and munificent benefactor of all mankind, and bless him for every thing you enjoy ? Have you an awful and amiable apprehension of him always on your mind, so as to beget in you a filial fear of offending him ? are you ever grateful to him for the innumerable mercies you momentarily receive from him.

You know the crime of ingratitude of one mortal to another is looked on by mankind in a very despicable, heinous, aggravating light, how much more so then, must

must it be to our God, our constant unwearied friend, who is always doing of good, " sending us rain from " heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food " and gladness?" Acts xiv. 17. Do you each morning when awake from sleep (the emblem of death) return your sincere and hearty thanks that you have not slept the sleep of death, but are comfortably refreshed with health and strength? do you humbly recommend yourselves and all your concerns to his kind over-ruling providence the following day, begging of him to preserve you from all evil, especially the evil of sin, and in particular from those sins which have the easiest access to you, and the greatest predominance over you? do you humbly and sincerely, and earnestly request of him wisdom and understanding, that you may do all the good your natures are capable of, both to the bodies and souls of your fellow creatures, as your capacity, situation, and circumstances in life will admit of? or do you not go forth and enter upon the affairs of life on your own strength, vainly imagining so highly of your reason and understanding, that that is sufficient to guide you in all things without the assistance of almighty God? are you always in a thankful frame of mind when you partake of any of the good creatures of God? are you humble contented and thankful in the situation and condition of life providence has permitted you to be in? do you do to all mankind, in every circumstance and degree, what you are willing they in the like circumstances should do to you? do you do every thing for the honour and glory of God, and the good of your fellow-mortals? are you very circumspect and watchful over your own heart, and do you harbour no hard or unbecoming

unbecoming thoughts of God, or secret resentment, malice or revenge against your neighbour ? do you abstain from excess both in eating and drinking ? do you keep your bodies pure and chaste ? is marriage honourable in your estimation, and whoredom despicable ? at the close of every day do you return almighty God unfeigned thanks for each mercy received the day past, humbly committing your whole selves, soul and body, to his most gracious care and protection the night following, that your sleep may be sweet, comfortable, and refreshing ; that if you awake at midnight, or at cock-crowing, your thoughts and desires may be ever towards God ? Or rather on the contrary, do you not boast of your hearts desire, and make covetousness your gold, and through pride will not seek after God, not so much as having him in all your thoughts, much less in your desires and your hearts ? are not the thoughts of piety and gratitude to God, benevolence and charity to your neighbours grievous to your soul ? are not God's judgments or mercies far out of your sight ? and have you not said in your heart, you shall not be moved ? are not your mouths full of blasphemies to your Maker ; or cursing, deceit, fraud, and mischief to your neighbour ? do you not take delight in vain, profane chattering, and hate and abhor every thing in conversation that is serious ; that has a tendency to do good, to promote spiritual knowledge ; that is really edifying, both for your own and others salvation ? do you not sleep and awake, eat and drink, go about your worldly employments, or trifle and idle away your precious hours, without having a grateful thought to almighty God, in whom the heathen

poets

poets have said mankind live, move, and have their being.

If you will honestly and impartially examine your hearts, it is very possible, if not probable, you will have reason to humble yourselves before the great Searcher of them, for some one or other of these aggravating sins committed by you, either of omission or commission.

Let me advise you to follow the example of the poor publican in the gospel, who cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner," Luke xviii. 13.

With the greatest sincerity and importunity I intreat you to examine the real state of your souls, by probing your hearts to the bottom. I now recommend to you retirement from the world one hour or two every day, to humble yourselves in the more immediate presence of God, in order to be made thoroughly sensible of all your transgressions, which is a duty resulting from natural religion. Therefore tremble before him at the sense of the guilt which you have contracted by breaking the laws of natural religion, the obligations which you are under to God, and the duties necessarily flowing from thence, which are engraven on your heart. Expostulate with yourselves in some such language as this: O my soul, what shall I do to avert the punishment so justly due to me, for the manifold neglects of duty to God and my neighbour! O how innumerable are the instances wherein I have transgressed? How have I permitted my lusts and passions to obtain victory over my reason and conscience! Humbly and earnestly prostrate yourselves before God, seeking pardon and forgiveness, and for the grace of repentance and sincere obedience.

dience. If you are truly sensible of your sins and follies, you will then be humble and self-diffident of your reason and judgment, and concerning the maxims and tenets of religion you imbibed from education : or for the want of education, or from your own wild imaginations and indigested thoughts ; or from the company and conversation of libertines, enslaved thinkers ; or from the poisonous writings of infidels ; deistical, enthusiastical triflers.

You will also have great reason to believe, that by some one or other of these causes you have provoked almighty God, for not thoroughly examining his most gracious tenders of mercy and pardon in his holy word, with an upright and honest heart, desirous of information and instruction, that you might believe and know the truth, however contrary and opposite to your vitiated inclinations and corrupted passions, and be prevailed with no longer to contemn the dispensations of his rich kindness and goodness manifested to all poor, frail, indigent, short-sighted mortals.

Pray, is it fitting and reasonable that because some of the historical parts of sacred writ does seem to your fallible, short-sighted understandings, to clash or disagree with other parts of it, that you should despise and disregard the whole of it ? or that because there are some mysterious doctrines in it, far above your comprehension, or the comprehension of the most refined understanding, that yet you will not believe it ? I desire you would exercise your reason, and examine the religion of nature.

Is not all nature itself one grand mystery ; the heavens above us, the earth beneath us, the waters under the earth ? Is not the production and sustenance of an infinite variety of creatures, both animate and vegetative, by one only invisible, omniscient, omnipresent Being, very mysterious, yea, incomprehensible ? Is not your own existence itself incomprehensible to you ?

Can you comprehend how spirit and matter, your soul and body is united, and what your soul is, and in what way and manner it now exists, and how it possibly can exist when departed out of the body ? or how, and in what manner it will be reunited to the body at the resurrection, when the body has been crumbled to dust, and scattered about in the earth and air in millions and millions of atom-particles ? Can you comprehend immortality or eternity ?

Are not these mysterious unfathomable things to our finite, limited understandings ; which is comprehended by almighty God only, who is infinite in wisdom, knowledge, and power ?

Are they less true, or less to be believed, for that they cannot be comprehended by us poor short-sighted mortals, who are but of yesterday, and know nothing, “ whose days upon earth are as a shadow ?” Job viii. 9. Is not God almighty all-powerful ? Is he not truth itself ? He certainly is ; and therefore it is most reasonable for us to believe that those things that are pronounced and declared true by him, merely on the veracity of his infallible word, though we cannot possibly conceive how or in what manner they are so.

He does not require us to believe any one thing which contradicts our senses, but only to believe there are things true, which are superior to our reason and understanding, above our comprehension ; which all mankind will agree to, if they are not infatuated, and have not a tincture of insanity in them.

In the name of the God of nature then, why do you act so vain and self-conceited as not to submit your proud reason to his infallible declarations ? “ Why dost thou strive against him who giveth not any account of his matters ?” Job xxxiii. 13. Does not natural reason, or the religion of nature, testify the truth of divine revelation, “ that as the heavens are higher than the earth, “ so are God’s ways higher than our ways, and his “ thoughts higher than our thoughts,” Isa. lv. 9. “ Do not all the works of God, and his dispensations “ of Providence, proclaim this infallible truth ? They actually do, and therefore it is rational and meet for you to argue thus with yourselves, If the religion of Jesus of Nazareth is true, and he was commissioned by God to come from heaven to earth to publish it, and I should die in my present state of unbelief, I must consequently die in my sins, John viii. 24. and therefore must necessarily be miserable to all eternity ? Christ commanded his eleven disciples, and does now command all succeeding ministers to publish, and teach his gospel to every creature in the world, most positively declaring, “ that he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ; “ but he that believeth not shall be damned, Mark xvi. “ 16. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he

“ he hath commanded them, assuring them he would
 “ always be with them to the end of the world,” Matt.
 xxviii. 19, 20.

Now you Deists can make no sort of excuse or plea
 whatsoever, at the awful and tremendous day of judg-
 ment, nor can alledge that the gospel of the blessed Jesus
 did not reach you; for you were born and bred in
 a christian country, and where the gospel was preached
 on the first day of every week, in commemoration of
 the truth of it, and established by civil authority, by
 King, Lords, and Commons, who has commanded it to
 be printed in your mother tongue, and have given all
 men free liberty to peruse it, as oft as they please, none
 making them afraid: and all may worship God in that
 way and manner as their consciences dictates to them is
 most agreeable to his holy word, without being so much
 as interrupted or molested, much less persecuted for it.

All of you Deists, as well as us Christians, live
 under the best and mildest of laws and governments,
 having the royal proclamation for your and our se-
 curity, corroborated by the lords spiritual and tempo-
 ral in parliament: which is not like living under an ar-
 bitrary, tyrannical, popish government, who persecutes,
 imprisons and gibbets, racks and burns those protestant
 christians who will not deny the use of their senses, by
 not believing bread to be the identical body of the bles-
 sed Jesus, and wine to be his blood. But blessed be God
 protestant christians have not so learned Christ; they do
 obey his commands by commemorating his dying love,
 sacramentally partaking of bread and wine, in order to
 “ shew forth the Lord’s death till he come, 1 Cor. xi.

“ 26. Take heed, brethren, says the apostle, lest there be
 “ in you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the
 “ living God, but exhort one another daily, while it is
 “ called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through
 “ the deceitfulness of sin, Heb. iii. 12, 13. Therefore
 “ fear lest a promise being left you of entering his rest,
 “ any of you should seem to come short of it, for unto
 “ you is the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but
 “ the word preached did not profit, not being mixed
 “ with faith in them that heard it,” Heb. iv. 1, 2.
 This is your unhappy lamentable case; but see to get out
 of it, I beseech you, and take St. Paul’s council,
 “ follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them
 “ that call on the Lord out of a pure heart,” 2 Tim.
 ii. 22. which is love unfeigned.

The blessed Jesus hath assured us, his doctrine was
 not his own but God’s that sent him, and that if any
 man will do God’s will, “ he shall know of the doctrine
 “ whether it be of God, or whether he spake of him-
 “ self,” John vii. 17.

Natural religion tells you, that there is no surer or
 safer way to discover or find out truth, than doing the
 will of God. If you will be honest, sincere and upright
 in the examination of yourselves, in your humiliations
 to God, with a full purpose of heart and determination of
 will, (by the assistance of his grace) to forsake every
 thing that has the least tendency to displease him; and on
 the contrary, to be very assiduous to do all things that are
 acceptable and well pleasing in his sight; to search after
 spiritual understanding, as you would for hid treasures,
 mines

mines of silver and gold, “ then you would understand
 “ the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of
 “ God,” Prov. ii. 4, 5. Therefore let me prevail with
 you, “ to trust in the Lord with all your heart, and
 “ lean not unto your own understanding. In all your
 “ ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your
 “ paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord,
 “ and depart from evil, Pro. iii. 5, 6, 7. For in every
 “ nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteouf-
 “ ness, is accepted with him,” Acts x. 35. Thus
 practising is doing the will of God. Then you will know
 the blessed Jesus’s doctrine is from God : and when
 you know it, do it; for he has declared those are his
 friends only, that do whatsoever he commands them,
 John xv. 14. Be not easy and contented with a specu-
 lative knowledge of the will of God, nor rest satisfied
 till you know it vitally, that is, experimentally, and you
 find the yoke of Christ to be easy, and his burthen light,
 as he has assured you, Matt. xi. 30. and that his com-
 mandments are not grievous, 1 John v. 3. then he
 will fulfil his most gracious beneficial promise to
 you recorded, John xiv. 21. by manifesting himself
 to your souls; that is, all such obedient christians shall
 not only enjoy the fruit and benefit of Christ’s love,
 but they shall enjoy the sense of his love, and experi-
 ence the sensible manifestations, and inward diffusions, of
 his love in their own souls. Therefore the only method
 to procure the favour of God and Christ, and to be in
 reality sensible of it, is to be very careful and diligent
 in obediential walking with him, and before him.
 Mankind may as well, and with as much reason, think

to nourish their bodies with poison, as to enjoy the favour and friendship of God and Christ in a sinful course of life: "for he that sinneth is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifest, that he might destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," ver. 9. That is, he is no evil doer, no worker of iniquity, no habitual customary sinner: he goes not on in any way or course of sin, as the resolutely wicked do, who make a trade of it. He doth not tolerate or allow himself in any one single act of sin: he has not his will bent for it, neither his heart or mind set upon sin, as the resolved sinner has; but he has a heart and will opposite to, and set against, all manner of sin, by reason he has an inward principle inclining and disposing him to hate and oppose sin, (which is the sanctifying grace of God, that causes him daily more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness,) Therefore in this "the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God; neither he that loveth not his brother, 1 John iii. 10. Let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous, ver. 7. For whosoever abideth in Christ, sinneth not: whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him or known him," ver. 6. that is, whosoever lives in sin, and goes on in a course of sinning, is the servant and slave of sin; and although his reason condemns him, and his conscience boggles at sin, and his will

will is somewhat averſe to it, and not by any means thoroughly reconciled to it, yet if he yeilds his members inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs unto ſin, he is a young ſlave and ſervant of ſin, and whatſoever his pretences may be he has no right knowledge of the bleſſed Jeſus, no vital faith in him: but thoſe that abideth in Chriſt are by faith united to him: thoſe have a living faith who are taught and governed by him, who make it their conſtant care and continual endeavour to ſhun and avoid all ſin: for bleſſed are they “ that
 “ do his commandments, that they may have a right
 “ to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates
 “ into the city, Rev. xxii. 14. of the living God, the
 “ heavenly Jeruſalem, wherein dwelleth an innume-
 “ rable company of angels, the general aſſembly, and
 “ church of the firſt-born, which are written in heaven;
 “ and to God the judge of all, and to the ſpirits of
 “ juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the mediator of
 “ the New Covenant, and to the blood of ſprinkling,
 “ that ſpeaketh better things than that of Abel: there-
 “ fore ſee that you reſuſe not him that ſpeaketh; for
 “ if they eſcaped not, who reſuſed him that ſpake on
 “ earth, much more ſhall we not eſcape, if we turn
 “ away from him that ſpeaketh from heaven,” Heb.
 “ xii. 22 to 26.

Now I would challenge the whole world to produce ſuch a book as the Holy Bible; the book of books; the moſt antient of all books; teſtifying of Chriſt; fore-
 telling the time and all the minute circumſtances of his coming; with his ſufferings and death; and all thoſe prophecies exactly fulfilled and accompliſhed in him.

But

But it is very much to be lamented, that many persons, who profess to believe in natural religion, and who call themselves rational creatures, will not be at the trouble and pains to enquire into the grounds and authority of the christian religion ; therefore it will be a just judgment upon such, as shut their eyes against all the clear evidence of the religion of the blessed Jesus, if they should be given up to believe a lie ; that “ they “ all might be damned who believe not the truth, but “ had pleasure in unrighteousness,” 2 Theff. ii. 12. For the blessed Jesus assured mankind, that, “ This “ is the condemnation, that light is come into the “ world ; and men loved darkness rather than light, “ because their deeds were evil,” John iii. 19. The doctrine of the gospel of Christ is too pure and holy for a carnal mind ; therefore no evidence of the truth of it, how clear soever, will be received by such. God cannot enter into their hearts, till Mammon is rooted out of them. “ We cannot serve two masters.” Those who have a clear sight of heaven will put but very little value on the unsatisfactory, short-liv’d pleasures of this life ; and, on the contrary, it is impossible, that those whose whole concern is about them, who are drowned in carnal, sensual enjoyments, can have any true taste and relish for spiritual, intellectual pleasures.

For the love of this world, and “ the friendship of it, “ is enmity to God, James iv. 4. The carnal mind is “ enmity against God,” Rom. viii. 7.

It

It was a temptation of sense which caused the first sin to be committed by our first parents ; and the way of reparation is, to open the eyes of their corrupted, polluted posterity, and to give them a thorough sense of their sin, and terrible loss of the enjoyment of God. Vice and wickedness clouds and darkens the eyes of our understandings, and makes them blind to the only true and real good pleasure. The gospel is foolishness to such persons. But it is not for want of evidence that causes mankind not to embrace the religion of Jesus ; but it is for want of consideration, for want of humility, for want of a spiritual taste, for want of real goodness, such persons have rendered themselves unqualified ; therefore not proper objects to receive the truth in the love of it.

The Holy Spirit by the royal psalmist declares, that to “ him that ordereth his conversation aright will be shewn the salvation of God,” Psalm l. 23. And the blessed Jesus hath assured mankind, that “ No man “ can come unto him, except the father that sent him, “ draw him,” John vi. 44. This was the reason why John the Baptist was sent as a forerunner, to prepare the way for the blessed Jesus, by preaching the duty of repentance, to qualify mankind for their receiving and believing in his holy doctrine : therefore such persons, who repented of their sins, upon his preaching, did with joy embrace this glorious doctrine ; and, on the contrary, those who would not part with their beloved sins, remained obdurate, though in other points and things were men of sense and learning. As Christ
told

told the priests and elders, as recorded in Matt. xxi. 32. " John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not, but the publicans " and the harlots believed him ; and ye when ye had " seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him." And when the blessed Jesus sought to prepare them for his doctrine, by forewarning them that they could not serve God and Mammon, it is recorded by St. Luke that the Pharisees also, " who were covetous, heard these things, derided him," Luke xvi. 14. But he immediately instructed them (if their proud hearts had permitted them to regard it) that what is highly " esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God," ver. 15. And he set forth the truth of his doctrine, by the example of rich, hard-hearted Dives, and poor, humble Lazarus ; and declared, it was " easier for a camel to go through the " eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the " kingdom of God," Luke xviii. 25. And that whosoever he be that " forsaketh not all that he hath, he " cannot be his disciple," Luke xiv. 33.

Now, if all mankind would explain this seeming harsh doctrine in its just sense ; which is, that those who are not ready and willing to forsake all the pleasures and enjoyments of sense, worldly profits and advantages, as if they actually hated them (as Christ declared in a very particular and positive manner, as recorded in the 26th verse of this chapter) when they come in competition with any one of his commands, and do not take up the cross and follow him, they cannot possibly be his disciples ; it would not appear the least absurd, but very rational.

If Jesus of Nazareth was now on earth, proposing these conditions of faith and obedience, what a small number of disciples, among the generality of professors, would he have? Many, many, it is much to be feared, would think heaven too hard to be obtained on those terms, those carnal restrictions.

Now the root and cause of all infidelity is the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life; these gratifications of sense blind the understanding, darken the heart, and so obstinately prevent spiritual and divine light to shine upon it: therefore, till these obstacles are removed, the truth of the gospel cannot be received, the commands of the blessed Jesus cannot be obeyed: for the spirit of God, which is a spirit of purity and holiness, will not enter and dwell in a heart intoxicated with sensuality and covetousness; these embarrassments must be first extricated, before the holy spirit will accept of any invitation from them; but the extricating of evil thoughts, evil desires, evil habits, out of our hearts, must be from God: for who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin," Prov. xx. 9. The royal psalmist was very sensible of it, when he so earnestly prayed to God to create "in him a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within him," Ps. li. 10. And to "open his eyes that he might behold the wondrous things out of his law," Ps. cxix. 18. And to "give him understanding that he might live," ver. 144. And St. Paul assures us, that it is by "grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves: it is the gift

“ gift of God,” Eph. ii. 8. And that no man can say that “ Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,” 1 Cor. xii. 3. But though to obtain these things ourselves is out of our power, yet the means in order thereto the blessed Jesus hath assured us is not out of our power, which is to ask, to seek, and knock for it. Therefore, “ ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you,” Matt. vii. 7. For if mankind, “ being evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall their heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Luke xi. 13. But mankind must not ask, petition, or seek with lukewarmness and indifference, but they must do it with all the powers and faculties of their souls; exerting themselves with all possible vigour, both ardently and incessantly, as the importance of the case demands; their great all being at stake, which is nothing less than their precious and immortal souls; salvation or damnation, everlasting, unspeakable happiness, or everlasting, unspeakable misery: but God is gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and of great goodness, and those who come to him in sincerity, he will “ in no wise cast out,” John vi. 37. For those that “ seek him shall find him, when they shall search for him with all their heart,” Jer. xxix. 13. “ For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him,” Rom. x. 12.

Therefore I conclude; earnestly beseeching you to be frequently addressing yourselves to almighty God, with the profoundest reverence and humility, with the utmost

utmost sincerity of soul, in some such like expressions as in the following prayer, which I have composed, in order to beget in you a true spirit of supplication, a hearty, honest desire to know the truth, that you may be converted to the faith of Christ, which was once delivered to the saints. And now, dear fellow creatures, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified :” at the same time forewarning you, with the utmost sincerity, in the spirit of meekness, with an unfeigned, disinterested love and affection, that if you slight, neglect, despise these offers of rich grace, made to you in the glorious gospel of Christ ; will not accept of him, his mercy, his easy yoke, and light burthen; his paths and ways, which are all pleasant and agreeable, peaceable and joyous ; but will follow the dictates of your corrupted nature ; sinful, short-lived, imaginary pleasures, unsatisfactory enjoyments, that God’s spirit will not always strive with you ; that he will not oblige, or force you to be qualified to be meet partakers of his heavenly kingdom ; the most exquisite, refined, unspeakable, eternal joys of heaven, whether you will or not.

Therefore I conclude my hearty, sincere, affectionate, disinterested, pleasant, pains-taking, long epistle to you, earnestly praying and beseeching you in this your day of grace, to consider so as to believe and obey in the things which belong unto your everlasting peace and happiness, before death seals your character,

character, and so are irrevocably hid from your eyes; which I pray God may not be the unspeakable miserable condition of any of you. But if so, you will, at the grand and awful day of judgment, charge the fault to no one but yourselves; because you wilfully disregarded and disobeyed the means of God's rich tenders of grace and mercy, so freely, invitingly, and alluringly offered you in the glorious gospel of his Son: which gospel (if you are in your right understandings) you must acknowledge is exceeding kind and beneficent, just and equitable, calculated for the good order of all rational social creatures, for their mutual advantage, comfort and happiness in this world, and their exquisite eternal happiness in the world to come. Therefore, "if you sin
 " wilfully, after that you have received the knowledge
 " of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifices for
 " sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and
 " fiery indignation, which shall devour the adver-
 " saries. He that despised Moses's law, died without
 " mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much
 " sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought
 " worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of
 " God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant
 " wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and
 " hath done despight unto the Spirit of grace?" Heb.
 x. 26 to 30.

V A L E & C A V E.

Edward Goldney, senr.

EASTER MONDAY,
 LONDON, APRIL 16, 1759.

A
POETICAL ESSAY

O N

The Awful and Tremendous
Day of Judgment, in order
to Awaken and Rouse the
Deists out of their Stupid,
Dreadful Incredulity.

OH! think you Deists, how you'll avoid Hell's foam,
How see the SAVIOUR seated on his Throne!
A Cloud his Chariot, and fill'd with burning Beams
Full Blaze of Glory! like the North it streams!
One mighty Shechinah! refulgent Ray!
That scatters Darkness o'er the dimmer Day.
The Sun seeks Shelter in the wasting Flood;
The conscious Moon blushes herself to Blood;
Old Chaos now in double State returns;
With double Ardour ev'ry Comet burns,

M

Furious.

Furious they whirl before the SAVIOUR'S Throne ;
In dreadful Hissings speak the eternal Son :
As wide as Space pale Terror spreads her Reign,
Of Orders burst the indissoluble Chain :
To CHRIST for succour all Mankind will pray :
But all Mankind can't avert the awful Day.

What Horror seize Mankind, which were to Reason blind,
Tho' Deists once, yet not in Hell so found :
How will they then with Wrath and Anguish prest,
The Worm all gnawing on their relenting Breast,
Rave, Curse, Weep, Gnash, Groan, and Curse again,
And Foam, and Roar, tumultuous like the Ocean ;
Rend with their Groans Damnation's dark Retreat :
Their Groans are lost, nor reach the Mercy Seat.

Know then this Truth, ye Deists, this believe,
In disbelieving, you yourselves deceive.

And now the Judge descends, the SAVIOUR comes,
Rend Heav'n, groan Hell, break, burst, ye Iron Tombs !

The

The living Chariot rattles thro' the Air, *
 He stalks before, who used to dart Despair,
 Death conquer'd, after crawls in mad Dismay,
 Whole Fields of Light'ning round the Conqu'ror play,
 And rushing Whirlwinds rush along the blazing Way.
 Celestial Glory circles all his Head,
 In Heaven enthron'd, and on Hell doth tread.
 As rushing Torrents pour their rapid Streams,
 So fierce his Fury burns, so full his glory Beams :
 Millions of Myriads wait upon his Nod,
 Saints, Angels, eccho the descending God,
 Ah ! what Difference now from what he once appear'd,
 When Unbelievers scorn'd him, whom Angels rever'd ;
 When bloody Drops pour'd forth from every Pore,
 And Beings groan'd that never groan'd before.

Lo ! view the Cross on high, the Signal's made,
 (Now Wealth and Titles, Crowns and Honours, fade)
 For all to listen, and their Sentence hear,
 From the Atheist, to the Deist's Ear.
 Believers then, will with a Shout profound
 Proclaim their Joy, express their Bliss around :

* Ezek. iii. 13.

With Pleasure now they see the Race they run,
Their Labours ended, and their Bliss begun.

Bless'd JESUS smiles, pleas'd with their glowing Love,
Approach (he says, in soft and gentle Strains
Welcome to me, and to celestial Realms ;
Come then, receive your unspeakable Reward,
ANGELS conduct them to the Favour of their LORD.

Ye CHERUBS, fly before, with chearful Voice,
Bid Heavens, Dominions, Powers, and Thrones rejoice.
Now with dejected Looks, the Deists fears,
Trembles, but no more mocks or jeers,
Slowly they move to meet their dreadful Fate,
And now they howl, and now lament too late :
To these in Thunder the Judge prepares to speak,
The Thunders know his Will, and all around him break.
Then darts a Frown that shakes all Nature's Frame,
The incarnate GOD now becomes a burning Flame,
Wretches accurst, ungrateful, and forlorn,
The Jest of Devils, and the heavenly Scorn ;

No

No Prayers, no Sighs, no Tears will now avail,
Returning Justice lifts aloft her Scale ;
Mercy rejected will not ever last,
A Day was once, but oh! that Day is past :
In vain for you I liv'd, I bled, I dy'd :
Deists begone, taste Vengeance you despis'd,
Conscience distracts them, Devils mock their Cries,
And point with flaming Fingers to the Skies :
Then hurl the Wretches where Flames ever flash,
And Smoak, Shrieks, Light'ning, Thunders, always clash.
Where every Curse, and every Plague's confin'd,
Where dies all Hope, the cordial of the Mind,
And ever lives the conscious, guilty, Self-deceiver,
Banished in everlasting Torments from his despised,
Rejected SAVIOUR.

The Grand Affize Compleatly Ended ;
Christ the Judge is Reascended ;
The Heavenly Host their Lord Attended
With Shouts of Joy,—TIME IS ENDED.

F I N I S.

[150]

TO

The GOD of Universal Nature,

A

P R A Y E R,

Composed by the Author of the foregoing Epistle, for the use of those DEISTS who are honest, sincere, and industrious in searching after Truth, in order to embrace it in the love of it; who are very willing and desirous to part with every pre-conceived sentiment, that does or may obstruct their finding it.

O THOU Almighty, incomprehensible God of universal nature! Thou great first cause and support of all worlds, creatures, and things visible and invisible! O Thou only good, beneficent, generous Being, who hast so excellently distinguished mankind from all the other of thy creatures on earth, with that noble faculty of reason and understanding, with which
I adore

I adore and worship Thee, in profound reverence and prostration of soul, and with the most hearty, unfeigned sincerity and gratitude offer up unto thee my thanksgivings and praise, in the highest strains of devotion a finite creature possibly can pay to his Creator, Preserver, and constant, unwearied, munificent Benefactor : at the same time with the utmost humility of heart and abasement of soul, (to my unspeakable shame and sorrow) I acknowledge and confess before thee, that I have acted very unbecoming the dignity of a rational creature, both toward thee, my neighbour, and myself ; having very frequently permitted my reason and understanding to be baffled and conquered by my almost ungovernable headstrong lusts and passions ; for even when I found myself somewhat inclined to do good, evil was present with me with great prevalency ; and I find

my heart and mind much more prone to vice than virtue, to evil than good.

How I came by this corrupted depraved nature, my judgment is not yet convinced of: my reason and understanding dictates to me, it could not possibly be derived from thee, who art the very spring and fountain of all goodness, perfection and knowledge; consequently thou must have access to the very thoughts of my heart, the desires of my soul, the intentions of my mind, and the actions of my life, from whom no secret can possibly be concealed. Therefore I most humbly and importunately beseech thee that thou wouldest, in the course of thy Providence, teach me what I do not perceive, for my spiritual advantage, by directing my thoughts, illuminating my understanding, conveying to me the knowledge and cause of my corrupted vitiated nature, and informing me through what channel I received

received it, and what remedy I shall make use of, in order to master and conquer it, so as to be freed from it. I frequently find my heart cold and lukewarm, languid and lifeless, very far from being fired with that love and gratitude to thee my God, which my reason and understanding dictates is thy just unalienable right, due from rational creatures to their great Creator. Therefore I most humbly beseech thee to beget in me a hearty and sincere affection to love thee, and an earnest desire to please thee in all things, being conscious I have in innumerable instances transgressed the laws of natural religion, and violated the dictates of reason and conscience, which thou hast engraven on all the hearts of thy reasonable creatures. *

* Here call to remembrance the particular sins you have been guilty of, especially that sin or sins that do most easily beset you, praying for grace and strength to conquer and overcome them in the future part of life.

I would willingly and cheerfully embrace and obey every command that comes from thee, and believe every declaration of thy divine mind and will, that thou hast been pleased to communicate to mankind. I importunately beseech thee, O Lord, to open my understanding, to unlock every power and faculty of my soul, to free me from prejudices of all kinds and degrees whatsoever, which possibly have prevented, or may prevent, my believing in a book, which christians call the Holy Bible, the word of God; which book I have perused, but finding declarations in it, which appears to me inconsistent with thy divine perfections, and moral goodness, and seeming contradictions; (here with an upright, honest, sincere heart recite the particulars) therefore I do not believe thy spirit to be the author of them: but whether it is owing to the length of time since the Bible was originally wrote, or whether

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ther through the revolution of ages and different customs and languages, and ways and manner of expression, by which means ideas may have been conveyed foreign to what they were intended, I cannot be certain of, therefore am at doubt concerning it; and whether my preconceived maxims of religion, or the indulgence of my unruly, headstrong passions is a principal cause of my unbelief, I am not certain of; I find declarations in this Bible relating to faith, which my reason and understanding do not comprehend, in particular such as these, viz. that thy only begotten Son, the brightness of thy glory, the express image of thy person, partaker of thy very essence, the maker of heaven and earth, and all things in it, whom the very angels worship and adore: that Deity should condescend and humble himself, and leave the regions of bliss and glory, and come down to earth, and unite his
divine

divine nature, to the nature of poor sinful man, and should be born of a poor virgin, and have a stable for his chamber, and a manger for his cradle, and be brought up in his infancy and childhood by the direction of a poor carpenter's family, and when arrived at maturity to travel up and down our wicked world doing good, both to the bodies and souls of mankind, giving of them the best and wisest instruction, who permitted many of them (though their Creator) to treat him with all the malice, and ill nature, and injustice possible, yea, to be murdered by them in a most cruel shocking manner, yet at the same time to pray for them : all which things I must confess are very far above my comprehension, and what appears to me to be incredible. However, I sincerely confess and acknowledge, there are very excellent maxims and rules of life (in this antient book, which the christians call

call the Holy Bible of the Old and New Testament) which has and must necessarily have a very great tendency to make mankind comfortable and happy in this world, and to qualify them for the enjoyment of perfect happiness in heaven.

The doctrines of this thy only begotten Son are such as these, that mankind must be born again, or they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, which consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, and that if any man come to this thy reputed only begotten Son, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, and yea his own life also, he cannot be his disciple, who has commanded them to love their very enemies, to bless those
that

that cursed them, and to pray for them which despitefully used them and persecuted them; the meaning of all which I acknowledge I do not comprehend, therefore can't believe.

However, as I am sensible that my understanding is limited and finite, O my God, I humbly beseech thee, if these declarations are agreeable to thy divine mind and will; and that if Jesus Christ is thy only begotten Son, and commissioned by thee, from heaven, as a Saviour and Redeemer of mankind; and that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life: Be pleased to give me a vital faith in him, this Bible declaring that it is by grace mankind are saved, through faith, and that not of themselves, but 'tis thy gift: if it be so, I earnestly implore thee for this gift, as the most valuable of all blessings,

sings, infinitely superior to thousands and millions of silver and gold, yea, to all the riches in the world. But on the contrary, if he is not thy only begotten Son, but an impostor, a deceiver, the very vilest of wretches; I beseech thee to give me wisdom and understanding to discover this very grand cheat and imposture; that I may be enabled to gainsay and argue with, and write against all his advocates, who have most artfully wrote to support the truth of his holy mission and doctrines; that I may be enabled by thee, to convince all the different denominations of christians in the world, of these deceptions and impositions that have been fostered on them and their forefathers, for upwards of seventeen hundred and fifty eight years; which concludes my very imperfect petitions; with humility and sincerity supplicating thy divine Majesty to remove
all

all my prejudices, obstinacy, and self-conceit; and make me entirely flexible, honest, upright, and sincere; open and free to receive conviction from thee of the truth in the love of it; and that it may influence my heart, soul and mind, and govern my thoughts, words, and actions, that they may be uniformly and exactly agreeable and conformable to thy divine unerring mind and will, both in time and to eternity. Amen.

N. B. If the Author of the foregoing Works should be so exceeding fortunate as to be a Means in the Hands of Providence of the Conversion of any speculative or practical Atheists, and Deists, or any Professors of Religion of any Denomination, that are practical Unbelievers of Christianity, so as to become the Disciples indeed of the blessed Jesus, He most humbly and earnestly requests that such happy new-born Souls would return Almighty God their unfeigned Thanksgiving and repeated Gratitude of Praise, for inclining and enabling him to compose them, and to publish them to the World; and that he may continually do all possible Good both to the Souls and Bodies of his Fellow Mortals universally, as extensive as his Capacity, Circumstances, and Situation in Life will admit of, even to the very last Breath He shall draw.

